

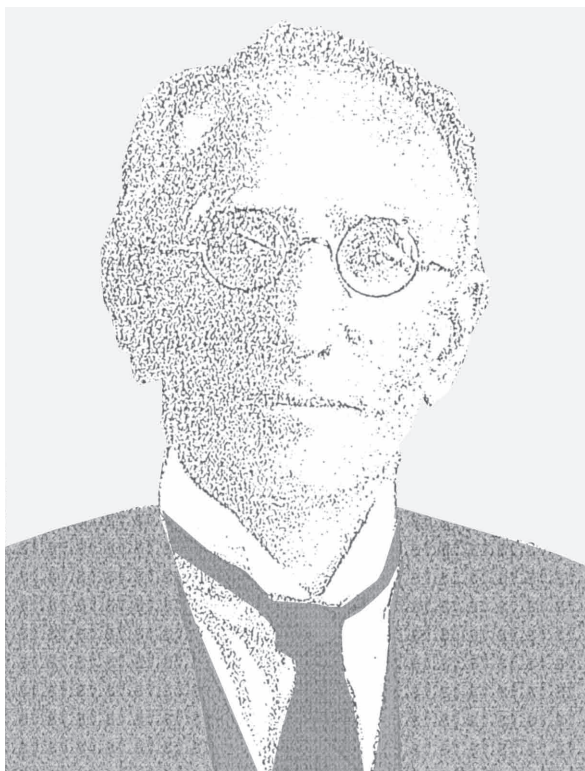


# *St Anthony's Family Care*





JOHN DAWSON AND HIS WIFE



The late D R Haugh L C. Founder of St Anthony's Home  
President, 1922 - 33.

# **ST. ANTHONY`S HOME, CROYDON**

## **THE WORK OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY (1921-51)**

### **Necessity and Beginning**

The stark reality of life facing young unmarried mothers in Sydney in the early decades of this century, especially in the inner city areas around Surry Hills, Redfern and Paddington, was the sheer necessity for the care and welfare of their infants. These unfortunate young women were only too willing to give their babes to anyone who wanted them. It was regretted that many a child of Catholic girl-mothers was being lost to the Catholic faith by being given over to State institutions or private people who were not Catholic. This situation was seen by the St. Vincent de Paul Society as presenting a worthy and necessary apostolate for the Society and Catholic laity with similar compassion and generosity.

### **Founder, Denis Robert Haugh**

One of the foundation branches of the Society in NSW was established in the 1800`s in the parish of St. Francis, Albion Street, Surry Hills, Sydney. To this branch in 1897 came a young tea importer and journalist from Toowoomba (Qld), Denis Robert Haugh. Devoting a large proportion of his time to the work of the Society, he became well known in the inner city area for his deep concern for the spiritual and material welfare of Catholic children in distress. It was said of Denis Haugh that he was one of the few people who could walk around Surry Hills alone at night, so respected was he by all, often referred to as `the saint of Surry Hills`.

Haugh was President of the Haymarket Conference (1907-19) and President of the Society`s Central Council of Sydney (1916-30). In constant attendance at the Children`s Shelter and the Children`s Court, Denis Haugh was appointed by Archbishop Michael Kelly of Sydney in 1911, to represent the Catholic Church with the Child Welfare Department in all matters relating to the welfare of Catholic children in State institutions in Sydney. This was extended to other dioceses of NSW by the bishops

there. The work of finding suitable Catholic homes for abandoned children around the city area would have proved beyond Haugh, were it not for the emergency shelter and care provided by a number of generous women who could take, unfortunately, only a certain number. Further-more, there was also the urgent need of protecting and saving the girl-mothers. Many a girl found in the tea-packer's shop a willing listener, ready to advise and console, with assurances built on faith and trust in God and St. Anthony to find shelter and care, to shield her from the critical eyes of society. Good, kind friends responded to Denis Haugh's continuous appeals for Catholic families throughout NSW, to adopt orphaned Catholic children who were State Wards in various institutions. For many years honorary secretary of St. Margaret's Hospital for Children, he found great assistance from Gertrude Abbott in trying to place distressed young women in suitable accommodation. It was said that Denis Haugh "was the motive power, the hand that guided, the will that strengthened and the wisdom that planned".

### **St. Anthony's Home, Petersham**

Haugh began the organisation and work of establishing a home for orphaned children in 1916, when a group called the "Stray Children's Committee" was formed, leading finally to the establishment of a Home for girl-mothers and their babies. A cottage in Albert Street, St. Peters was leased to the Society by Mrs Patchett, a well-respected custodian for the Child Welfare Department. Within a few months, the Society purchased a property at 13 Palace Street, Petersham (July, 1922), thus beginning the first St. Anthony's Home. Catholic laity generously responded, and the house, renovated and furnished, was opened officially by Archbishop Kelly, 19 November, 1922.

The ground floor was occupied by older children while the upper floor was used to accommodate the infants without mothers, and the gardener's cottage for mothers with their tiny babies. Applications increased in the months which followed, as it was a policy of St. Anthony's Home "never to refuse admittance to a child or a mother with an infant as long as there was a square foot of space available". It was not uncommon to

find an abandoned baby on the doorstep of the home, and occasionally publicity was given to this occurrence by a photograph in The Daily Guardian. A few months after such a photograph appeared the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop B. Cattaneo with his secretary, Dr. N. T. Gilroy, made a Christmas visit to St. Anthony's Home, and was received by its President, Denis Haugh, members of the Committee and the Matron and staff. The visitors were greatly impressed on hearing more of the details of the work which they said was "tangible proof of the noble and self-sacrificing manner in which the St. Vincent de Paul Society was accomplishing a most fruitful yet delicate task". (29.12.1924)\_

### **Transfer to Croydon**

The work being carried on at St. Anthony's was becoming duly recognised and appreciated. However, difficulty was being experienced in dealing with numerous applications received for admittance. A most pleasing feature was the increasing number of adoptions to approved Catholic families. While the children were well and happy at Petersham, crowding was unavoidable. In the midst of these difficulties, relief came providentially. Wychbury Grammar School for boys, conducted in the 'Humberstone Mansion' built in 1869 by John Dawson, closed in 1923. The Wychbury Estate was to be subdivided, and the Estate Agent, T. M. Burke, offered to the Archbishop of Sydney, the boys school and part of the present site of St. Anthony's Home, Croydon. This acquisition was promptly given over to the St. Vincent de Paul Society as an extension of its charitable undertaking of sheltering and caring for abandoned babies and girl-mothers with their infants. 'Wychbury' was renovated, suitably furnished, and extra land purchased through the generosity of the Catholic laity of Australia and the untiring support of priests in NSW. The original Home at Petersham was sold, and Matron Ella O'Regan made an appeal for people to help transfer the babies and older children, 50 in all, from Petersham to the present site in Alexandra Avenue, Croydon. As a young trained nurse on staff, Ella O'Regan was asked by the President of the Home to take over as Matron from 1923, to which she replied: "I will take the job temporarily until someone else is found". Matron O'Regan was to stay on as Matron for nearly 30 years! The blessing and opening of

the new St. Anthony's Home was in May, 1925.

### **Medical Staff**

From the beginning, the general health of the infants and children was under the care of an honorary medical staff led by Dr. John A. Kennedy. The main forms of sickness – pneumonia, bronchitis, influenza, gastro-enteritis – were kept under control by the medical expertise of the doctors and the constant care of the matron and nursing staff. On occasions, the seriously ill were transferred to hospital, and during epidemics of whooping cough affecting a large number of children, many anxious days and all night vigils were spent nursing them back to health. As the work grew so did the honorary medical staff; by 1930, this staff included Doctors M. Veech, Horace Foley and John O'Brien who gave many years of voluntary service to the infants and children of St. Anthony's Home, Croydon.

### **Auxiliary Groups**

Besides her nursing skills, Matron O'Regan possessed remarkable organising ability by establishing the Ladies Sewing Guild; in the first few years at Croydon it numbered 50 members and grew steadily over the years. The ladies took home material and returned the following month with the finished article, also contributing 1/- per month. Together with the Ladies Entertainment Committee, the Guild raised sufficient funds to supply many comforts for the children. Not only did they provide all their clothing, but also verandah, blinds and moveable glassed windows, allowing for warmth and light, and affording shelter from wind and rain. These women too, brightened the eyes of so many toddlers and young children by supplying the annual Christmas Tree with the help of a vast auxiliary group, old and young. Children in the schools, city and country, were encouraged to join in the great work of charity towards children less fortunate than themselves. Many a young fund-organiser called at the Home or sent the proceeds by Postal Note, raised from backyard bazaars, lemonade stalls, concerts or sheer direct giving.



## **The Depression**

The Depression and its prevailing financial slump (1929-30) were years of great anxiety for St. Anthony's because many kind friends reluctantly were forced to withdraw their usual contributions. Maintenance costs exceeded receipts by \$500, a difficulty to which was added another heavy burden. An unsympathetic Government withheld the usual subsidy on the grounds that the Committee would not divulge the names and addresses of the girl-mothers in the Home. St. Anthony's was faced with two unthinkable alternatives: reduce the number of residents, or keep them and be unable to provide for them. Such a dilemma was faced by the Committee and staff with unbounded faith; money from unexpected sources came in and the bank overdraft was reduced by \$600, a reward for unswerving trust in divine Providence.

## **Purpose of St. Anthony's**

In the light of the numerous and varied applications received at the Home, the Committee often had to make clear the main purposes for which St. Anthony's existed. It was not a Home for disagreeing parents to leave their children, nor was it a maternity hospital; in the latter case, St. Margaret's maternity Hospital, Bourke Street, Darlinghurst was always prepared to admit unmarried girls free. After they were ready to leave St. Margaret's, girl-mothers could be admitted to St. Anthony's with their babies, provided they were physically or financially unable to care for them. Girl-mothers in this situation were kept in the Home for twelve months free of charge to enable them to nurse their babies. At the end of that period they were free to leave, when they could take one of three options: leave the baby, or take it with her, or adopt it to the Home.

## **Adoptions**

Abandoned, deserted, stranded infants and children were always admitted and many a foundling was given loving care and protection in St. Anthony's Home. Admissions were made on necessity and charity with no distinctions of nationality or creed. Adoptions of infants and children to approved Catholic families were carried out under the provisions of the

Child Welfare Act, whereby persons adopting children were protected by law from any interference on the part of any parent or any other person. In the case of Catholic children, applications for adoption were to be accompanied by a recommendation from one's parish priest.

### **Safeguarding Reputation**

One of the most charitable aspects of the work of St. Anthony's is the safeguarding of the good name and reputation of highly respectable families. Many good daughters of the best of parents have found themselves needing the shelter and protection of the Home, far from the critical eyes of self-righteous society. From here they have been enabled to return to their parents without the slightest danger of their situation being revealed. No one can cast a stone at another.

### **Building for the Future**

Within a few years of the transfer of the Home to Croydon it became necessary to provide additional accommodation. In 1928 a weatherboard and fibro building was erected at the cost of \$1000, to provide quarters for twenty-five girls, thus leaving space in the original building to house the nursing staff. At this time there were between 50-70 babies being cared for with provision of nurseries, protected play areas for toddlers, washrooms, laundry, food preparation rooms, etc. The Home was able to maintain the lowest death rate among babies of any similar institution in NSW – three a year – and the nursing staff was commended for its competence and dedication by the Inspector for the Child Welfare Department, who at this time was Bertha Lawson (Henry's wife). Apart from this achievement, by 1935 the Committee was able to announce that the Home was free of debt.

However, it became evident that for the greater comfort and hygiene of the residents, and to meet further demands, a new and more accommodating building needed to be built. So in 1936 an imposing building was erected, known as the Archbishop Kelly Wing, to perpetuate the practical interest shown in the home by the Archbishop of Sydney.



The continued generosity of the Catholic laity of Sydney made it possible to provide further facilities into the next decade:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1937-38 | The Laundry (1000)   |
| 1941    | The Chapel (4500) – completely subscribed before the official opening.<br>An adjoining cottage to ensure privacy for expectant girl-mothers (8 accommodated) |
| 1943    | Shelter shed and sealed playground   |
| 1944    | Small Maternity Hospital (10 beds) built beside Kelly Wing (St. Anne`s)<br>Kindergarten for children under school age  |

### **Spiritual Direction**

From its inception the St Vincent de Paul Society has always sought and maintained spiritual direction and guidance for its works. When Denis Haugh joined the St. Francis Albion Street, Surry Hills Conference, he became a close friend of Fr. J. M. Cusack, the Administrator of the parish, who showed keen and practical interest in the work. Archbishop Michael Kelly, too, was concerned about the number of Catholic unmarried mothers accommodated in State institutions, and promised to assist any effort of the Society to provide a sanctuary for them. Other bishops and priests in NSW appreciated this work of the Society, relieved that such charitable lay men and women existed, who were devoted to the protection and care of people and families in need. More specifically, priests were always ready to give spiritual support and guidance to St. Anthony`s Home in various ways.

Spiritual directors like Frs. J.M. Cusack, G. Ellis Herlihy and M.J. Tansey in the early years, were specialists in charity and moral courage to persist in this arduous apostolate, with what they believed was `God`s work`. Many a girl-mother received kindly advice to start afresh; other priests urged their parishioners to be involved actively in this charity, encouraging adoptions, while others used their powers of oratory to stir hearts to respond to urgent appeals for monetary assistance. Annual Retreats were organised for the girl-mothers and staff while a monthly

Mass and novena of masses annually, together with the regular prayers of the children, were offered for the spiritual and temporal intentions of benefactors of St. Anthony's Home.

### **The Chapel**

For many years it had been the aspiration of those closely associated with the Home to erect a Chapel within the grounds for the spiritual well-being of the older children, girl-mothers and staff to readily and regularly participate in the Eucharist, and have a quiet place for private prayer. It was envisaged also, that such a Chapel would create a lasting impression in the minds of the older children, whereby they could recall from their earliest years this place of worship and prayer, as they lived out their future lives in the Catholic faith. This early aspiration was accomplished when the Chapel was blessed and opened at the Annual Reunion in September, 1941, by Archbishop N.T. Gilroy of Sydney.

### **Child Welfare**

Undoubtedly, the family is the true natural unit for the formation of children where they experience affection and security in companionship with their brothers and sisters living together. This important work of training children cannot be handed over by parents to substitutes, no matter how loving and caring these substitutes are. Essentially, the child is denied natural parental affection and the companionship of natural brothers and sisters.

Of necessity, the St. Vincent de Paul Society's original objective was to find safe refuge and loving protection for the abandoned children of Sydney, by appealing to suitable Catholic people to care for these children in their own homes. Thus its original understanding of the real function of St. Anthony's Home was to provide temporary refuge, protection and care for these children while their future was being worked out, i.e., it offered a temporary home only until a natural home was found. The more permanent solution lay in finding suitable adopting homes.

Over the years, the number of neglected children exceeded the number

of families willing to care for them, and the need to develop the Home still further became ever more urgent. Those engaged in the work of the Home always believed that, while institutions had their place, there was a growing tendency to overuse them. People generally developed the attitude that if the Home provided care, families would fulfill their duty of charity to these children by continuing to give monetary support, which they did most generously. While growing accustomed to the notion of orphanages as part of modern life, people expected these to be a `home` as far as circumstances would allow. Moreover, they knew that such `homes` merely tried to approximate as much as possible to the normal family unit. Even the best of carers cannot give the individual attention each child needs. Unfortunately, the necessary ordering in the Home for the convenient control of large numbers tends to inhibit initiative, and hinder the growth of an individual child's personality. Furthermore, there must be inherent in the child some resentment for being forced into a situation of feeling different from other children `outside`, who live with their parents, brothers and sisters. Thus St. Anthony's Home has always worked with the belief that the best arrangement for the children was to introduce them into some suitable family by adoption. Adoptions have always played a major part of the work, so that children could develop normally in an environment as nearly natural as possible.

During the period (1922-51) when the work of St. Anthony's Home continued under the auspices of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the following Brothers of the Society were presidents of the Home:

D.R. Haugh	(1922-33)	J.B. Maher	(1945-46)
M. Delves	(1933-42)	J. McGloin	(1946-51)
W.J. Carroll	(1942-44)		

### **Under new Management**

Between the years 1949-51 negotiations, initiated by the Society, were brought to fruition with the Sisters of St. Joseph and approved by Archbishop N.T. Gilroy of Sydney. The work, administration, assets and deeds of the property were transferred to the Institute of the Sisters of

St. Joseph in a formal Agreement by Mr. J. B. Maher, President of St. Vincent de Paul Society, Sydney-finalised on 2 June, 1952. So, from the beginning of 1952 the Sisters assumed responsibility for St. Anthony's Home, Croydon; the first community appointed were Srs. Vincent Jones, Ambrosi Robartson, Ambrose Curran, and Donnan Kearney.

### **The work of Sisters of St. Joseph (1952-72)**

#### **Why the Sisters of St. Joseph?**

This Congregation of women religious was founded in South Australia in 1866 by a priest, Julian Tenison Woods and a young governess, Mary MacKillop. Their initial intention was to open schools for the poor, i.e., those children who would otherwise be deprived of a Catholic education. However, the following year (1867), Bishop L.B. Sheil of Adelaide asked the Sisters of St. Joseph to take charge of a Refuge for women prisoners, previously controlled by a Committee, and supervised by two matrons who gave their services gratuitously until the Sisters were ready. The Refuge which received every applicant without respect of creed, was supported by voluntary contributions and by the work of the resident. Also, the Sisters did not hesitate a few years later, to accept responsibility for orphaned and destitute children, to feed and clothe them – this responsibility they accepted from a Catholic Board of Directors. For their own sustenance and that of the orphaned and destitute, the Sisters personally begged for alms, and relied on that they could collect through their activities. Their spirit was to depend for their means on divine Providence. In fact, they named their institution – House of Providence.

In 1880 when the Sisters arrived in Sydney, they opened a similar institution for the poor and destitute in Cumberland Street, the Rocks, always referred to it as 'The Providence'. From here, later on, boys were transferred to Kincumber and girls to Lane Cove, where the protection and care of orphaned children were maintained. Furthermore, in 1937 the Sisters of St. Joseph were offered, and they accepted the offer, to carry on the work initiated by Gertrude Abbott at St. Margaret's Maternity Hospital, Bourke Street, Darlinghurst.

It was not surprising then, that the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1951 saw in the Sisters of St. Joseph, a well-organised group of women religious with similar ideals of compassion and service for the less fortunate in society. Moreover, the Society from 1951 received valuable assistance and experience from the Sisters as co-workers in caring for the girl-mothers during their stay at St. Margaret's Hospital before they returned to St. Anthony's Croydon. For whatever reason, the sisters of St. Joseph were seen to be the natural successors of the work begun by the St. Vincent de Paul Society for abandoned babies and neglected children, and for unmarried mothers during their time of need. And so, the members of the first community of Josephite Sisters, as true followers of Mary MacKillop, took up the challenge of serving and managing a large institution already in existence for some thirty years, and highly respected among the Catholic community of NSW.

### **Transition**

This first community of Sisters worked with the existing staff and felt indebted to the valuable dedicated service given to St. Anthony's by such people as Matron Ella O'Regan, Sister Eileen O'Connell, Nurse Platt and Nurse Kath Piert, making the transition ever so much easier for them. To ease this transition still further, the St. Vincent de Paul Society paid the wages of the nursing staff for three months after the Sisters arrived in 1952.

In those early years for the Sisters of St. Joseph, the existing auxiliary groups such as the Ladies Sewing Guild under the leadership of Mrs. Penny and Mrs. McNamara, continued to contribute greatly towards supplying the children's clothing. This voluntary service was much appreciated by the Sisters, providing a great help to their own meagre resources.

As soon as the Sisters became more organised they were able to assess how they could link with other related works of the Congregation. The expectant mothers continued to be delivered at St. Margaret's Hospital, children aged between 3-6 years were accommodated at St. Joseph's Home for Children, Liverpool Rd., Croydon, under the Sisters' care since

1925; older girls were transferred to St. Joseph's Home, Lane Cove and boys to Kincumber or Westmead Boys Home.

### **Mothercraft Training School (1954)**

Having been trained herself at Renwick Hospital for Infants, Ella O'Regan spoke with Sr. Vincent of her own desire as Matron to establish a mothercraft training school for nurses, with its advantage as a means of securing staff. The suggestion was seen to be quite feasible as there was sufficient qualified staff to begin. The only problem was accommodation for trainees, so at first the intake was very small; only 7 nurses completed their training between the years 1954-56. However, with extra accommodation the number of trainees greatly increased and the School earned a creditable reputation through the successes of its students.

### **Meeting the Challenge**

A characteristic feature of Josephites is their practicality in coping with the ordinary daily challenges of their lives; one such challenge at St. Anthony's was the prevailing problem of inadequate finance. The solution was typical. Like their Sisters in the Congregation when funds are needed for other works, the Sisters at St. Anthony's decided on a new way of organising an appeal for funds - they used the Telephone Directory as a means to seek out donors willing to help the work. It was so successful that between 1954-62 people interested in the work responded so generously that the Sisters could proceed with upgrading the facilities for unmarried mothers, together with the ancillary needed. This system of three annual appeals at Christmas, Easter and Reunion, still operates, and is a major source of revenue 'to make ends meet'.

On the advice of some business men, an Advisory Board was established, enlisting the services of professional people and those with experience in finance. This Board continued to help and encourage the Sisters particularly when the Home had large debts.

From 1954, when a house was purchased for staff accommodation all through the 1960's, constant rebuilding, renovations, alterations,



modifications and extensions were necessary, to keep pace with the rapid development of the work for which St. Anthony's Home was originally intended. This continual building programme was merely to meet the growing demands to serve unmarried mothers and babies with adequate care and facilities, and to train and suitably accommodate the nursing staff according to the requirements of the Nurses Registration, which was granted finally in 1966.

### **Building Programme**

1954	House, 5 Alexandra Ave. purchased for staff accommodation.
1959	Nurseries in Kelly Wing refurbished.
1959	Hot water service installed throughout the buildings. New roofing on original building.
1962	Working Sacristy added to Chapel. Complete renovation of laundry and new machinery installed.
1963-64	Weatherboard/fibro building (1928) replaced by three-storey building linked with Kelly wing, providing new kitchen, dining room, visitors' rooms, toilet blocks, infirmary and dispensary, sewing and sun rooms, further accommodation for mothers and babies, 16 single room, general furnishings.
1964-65	Three storey Nurses Home built around the 'Humberstone Mansion' and replacing the 'Wychbury' weatherboard verandahs.
1965-67	Chaplain's accommodation. Administration offices. Alterations in the Kelly Wing, and refurbishing of St. Anthony's Mothercraft Hospital (St. Gerard's) to fulfil the requirements of registration by NSW Nurses Registration Board.
1969	House, 6 King Edward St., purchased to replace 5 Alexandra Ave. as staff accommodation. Two storey Convent built on north side of Chapel on the sites of 5 and 7 Alexandra Ave.
1971	A second storey on St. Gerard's building.

Throughout these extensions and renovations, the original `Humberstone Mansion` was preserved, and is quite observable within the present administration building – the original oak staircase and folding doors, and ornate ceilings.

### **Who paid for this building programme?**

Mention has been made of the Telephone Directory Appeals: also, the Sisters organised art unions, and stocked the stalls for annual fetes by their own activities of needlecraft and cooking skills, together with those of their many helpers. These sources of revenue, though constant, were merely meeting the day-to-day, bread-and-butter needs of St. Anthony`s. But perhaps the most significant (yet never certain or regular) source of finance was the occasional considerable Bequest – some large, some comparatively smaller.

These Bequests came from people, sometimes quite unknown to St. Anthony`s who wished to repay the Home for services to their families, or, alternately, through various advertisements, were moved to respond to a worthy charitable work done for the needy in the larger social community. It would seem true to say that both the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Sisters of St. Joseph in their work at S. Anthony`s were seen to be credible organisations handling such Bequests to alleviate the distress of deprived babies and infants.

But some people could think that the building programmes undertaken over the years at St. Anthony`s have been audacious, daring, venturesome. Both St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Sisters of St. Joseph would agree, that they needed to be bold, fearless and even reckless for the sake of the children and their unmarried mothers or other small children at risk. The motivating Gospel value characteristic of St. Anthony`s has always been the ability to take risks in faith. When one is secure in the regular adequate human means with which to operate, there is little room for faith, but rather, one relies on mere human business skills. When these means are absent or uncertain, then the only security is faith in God`s Providence in which to operate. One of the foundation

community, Sr. Vincent Jones said: "It is only when we have used the last loaf, can we say we depend on God's Providence". More than one Josephite Sister recalled: "After being at St. Anthony's I would never doubt the Providence of God". But, with equal truth, God helps those who help themselves.

### **Spiritual Direction**

One of the most central aspects of a Catholic Home such as St. Anthony's is the emphasis on making provision for the spiritual growth of those needing shelter, care and protection there. From the time the Sisters came to St. Anthony's they have endeavoured to maintain this constant service. The unmarried mothers have been assisted in many ways in this regard by access to opportunities for the Sacraments of the Church, daily prayer and Eucharist, frequent homilies by chaplains. Priests of religious orders have been in constant attendance, e.g., Franciscans, Marist Gathers, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Paulists. Over the years these priests have conducted short Retreats for the mothers and nursing staff, and were supported by priests from neighbouring parishes, e.g. when Bishop E. Kelly MSC was resident at Concord. For the past 20 years, Fr. Brian Murphy has been the resident chaplain, always available when needed.

### **Medical Staff**

Most of the Sisters who worked at St. Anthony's had previous experience at St. Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst, and with that experience they had contacts with medical specialists there. Gynaecologists and Paediatricians who served St. Margaret's were willing to continue this service to the unmarried mothers and infants at St. Anthony's. This honorary service was carried out on a regular weekly basis and on other occasions when required. They brought to their work the same spirit of generous service and medical excellence that characterised their work elsewhere. Dr. Peter McAuliffe served the unmarried mothers for thirty years until recently, while from the 1960's Dr. Hohn Quoyale and later Dr. Brian Kearney attended to the medical needs of the infants. Local general practitioners too, served the Home in the same honorary

capacity – Drs. J. Buckley, E. Sidoti, B. Pearson, J. Walker. These doctors will always be remembered by the Sisters of St. Joseph for their devoted and compassionate attention to the residents of St. Anthony's Home.

### **Benefactors**

Over the years there have been many and varied benefactors providing for the children, food, clothing, cots, toys, photos, entertainment, etc. which collectively have supported St. Anthony's in its basic needs. Perhaps the most prominent single benefactor of the Home during a period of over 50 years was the businessman, Reuben Scarfe. He first became associated with the Home as a young man of 18 years, who continued his older brother, Charles' service to the children, by bringing them lollies each week. The children were always delighted to welcome him as 'the lollio'. As Reuben became more experienced he used his acquired business knowledge to help St. Anthony's build a sound basis for organised fund-raising. Also, he generously supplied the vast amount of printed letterheads and stationery for the frequent annual Appeals. His Building Firm constructed the Convent, the surrounds to the original 'Humberstone Mansion', the top floor of St. Gerard's and other alterations, and he proved to be a 'tower of strength' each time St. Anthony's embarked on a new project. Moreover, Reuben Scarfe in the true Christian spirit of giving, has provided anonymously substantial donations for other works of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

### **Radical Changes before and after 1972**

Up till 1965, many and varied independent institutions such as Maternity Hospitals, e.g., Women's Crown Street, Royal Women's Paddington, St. Margaret's, St. Anthony's, also individuals, e.g., doctors, solicitors and clergymen, were operating their own agencies for the adoption, placement and care of a child deprived of a normal loving homelife with its own parents. These separate and independent agencies provided for adopting parents to apply through a solicitor to the courts for the legal adoption of a child. In the 60's current social opinion was manifesting significant changes; it was being expressed more and more, in favour of greater protection for the parties to the adoption, especially the child.

Some saw the need for sound legislation as a protection against possible malpractice.

Furthermore, other State Governments which were proceeding with new adoption laws, based their legislation on the desirability of maintaining a uniformity of approach, where an adoption order made in one State should be recognised in every other State. Legal adoption in NSW was first provided for in the 1923 Child Welfare Act, and extended under the Child Welfare Act of 1939. In keeping with social change and the growing incidence of adoption orders in NSW the 1965 Adoption of Children Act was passed, exclusively controlling adoption in NSW providing for the creation of new and permanent family relationships. Under this new law an adopted child, to all intents and purposes, ceased to be the child of its natural parents, and became the child of the adoptive parents as though it had been born to them in lawful wedlock.

### **Catholic Adoption Agency**

Moreover, the new legislation required additional work by medical staff, not only a more detailed medical examination of the child, but also information related to the natural parent's medical and social histories. Such time-consuming examinations and corresponding reports proved too much for the smaller hospitals, and the general effect of the new Act was the closure of many former agencies and Homes. The response of the Catholic Church was to implement the new Act in 1967 by centralising and co-ordinating the adoption of all Catholic children through its Catholic Adoption Agency set up in Young St., City, now transferred to West St., Lewisham, with a staff of qualified and competent social workers. This meant that St. Margaret's and St. Anthony's, along with other Catholic agencies, relinquished this work to the central agency.

The 1965 Act required among other things an understanding and implementation of the statutory provisions for adoption, the medical aspects relating to both the natural and adoptive parents and the child, and the psychiatric and legal aspects of the adoption. One great advantage of the central agency was the improved service to

the natural parents, usually the unmarried mother and sometimes the unmarried father, needing the continued help of a social worker. On the other hand, the Act made provision also for continued service to the adoptive parents and the child.

During the period up to 1972, adoption became the most frequent solution for the unplanned pregnancy, e.g., in 1972 the number of adoptions at St. Anthony's arranged through the Catholic Adoption Agency amounted to 300, which approximated closely to the number of single pregnant women accommodated there during that year. However, since that time, the numbers of single pregnant women have fallen considerably. On the other hand, of these, the greater number have chosen to keep the baby. There were many reasons for this :

- changes in societal attitudes towards women;
- women's rights were being proclaimed more openly;
- use of contraceptives and the abortion lobby were growing stronger;
- women were beginning to feel their sexual liberation;
- given the supporting parent's benefits, women felt they had more choices to keep the baby;
- a girl-mother with a baby experienced a stigma no longer;
- hence there were opened up for them, greater possibilities of keeping the baby, in the belief that everything would be all right.

But unfortunately, many were to discover later on that this belief was but a myth.

### **Effect on St. Anthony's**

This decline in the number of unmarried pregnant women necessitated:

- a re-evaluation of the services offered at St. Anthony's;
- determination of future use of facilities there;
- continuation of services being offered.

This re-evaluation found that some unmarried pregnant women were still opting to leave their family home, and those who seriously contemplated



adoption continued to be accommodated at St. Anthony's. The residential service was staffed by a Catholic Adoption Agency social worker in collaboration with the Sisters of St. Joseph. The decision was made to give priority to young women who seriously contemplated adoption. This decision was questioned as it was felt that young women unable or unprepared to say they were seriously contemplating adoption were being denied access to residential service in Catholic Homes. However, at St. Anthony's, care and protection were continually provided for young expectant unmarried mothers who were not contemplating adoption.

The special programme designed by the Catholic Adoption Agency and the Sisters aimed to give assistance to those who, because of their pregnancy, were alienated from their natural family or their normal social environment. It planned to give :

- some security to those who already felt 'unwanted'.
- a sense of confidence about the confinement, the forthcoming birth and possible adoption;
- to the mother, the freedom to change her mind and keep the baby;
- care, confidence, knowledge, sense of belonging for those who otherwise would be unable to proceed with the decision to adopt the child;
- continued residential service for up to 15 expectant unmarried mothers at St. Anthony's.

This reappraisal of residential service to unmarried mothers at St. Anthony's carried out by the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Centacare) made further recommendations that the Catholic Church support the proposal that more women's refuges, conducted under Catholic auspices, be established to accommodate expectant mothers who were not contemplating adoption.

The current specific service developed at St. Anthony's was in response to the experience gained over the years the Home has been functioning.

In the past, because of pressure of numbers, absence of social work help, social pressures to surrender the child, and lack of financial support, relinquishing mothers seeking updated news of their children, experienced continued depression and grief. This experience manifested the decision to surrender the child for adoption.

### **Admission Policy**

Intake was almost always in the latter stages of pregnancy when the early problems and decisions of an unplanned pregnancy had already been faced, when the young woman had decided to go ahead with the birth. At the initial interview, preferably including the parents or other significant people in her life, it would be established whether St. Anthony's was the most appropriate place for her to be. She could take one of two options: accept residential and medical care for some months until confinement, when it was assumed, adoption would take place: or alternately, if she had definitely decided to keep her baby, she would need to find permanent suitable accommodation before her confinement, i.e., build up her resources within the outside community, so that she would have an appropriate place for herself and the child.

However, St. Anthony's has always been aware that the young unmarried pregnant woman may require time away from her present living conditions to focus more carefully on her decisions to make the choice she could live with most comfortably for the rest of her life. Furthermore, every girl admitted to St. Anthony's was free to change her mind about adoption and if so, was not excluded from the programme offered. In fact, to any girl of any age or religious belief, who has suffered great emotional pressure and disapproval, St. Anthony's has offered a safe haven and professional services during pregnancy and confinement.

However, it needs to be said, that there are sound reasons against admitting in the one Home, those who decide to keep the baby and those who seriously contemplate adoption. Despite the assistance given to help the latter work through in advance the pain of loss, and strengthen their positive attitude in facing the future, unnecessary peer

pressure by those keeping the child is exerted on those adopting, even when the latter knows she is incapable of supporting or caring for the child. Each group has different needs and requires a separate and specific programme to face the future. Moreover, the most common opinion among professional social workers is that each group should be supported in separate refuges with completely different functions.

### **Further Changes after 1975 – Centacare**

In response to the Australian Government's Family Law Bill in 1974, which required that no child under 12 months was to be kept in an institution, Centacare made the decision to implement the policy of private foster homes for children. This was to replace the institutional-style residential care operating in Catholic Homes. And no one at St. Anthony's doubted the wisdom that private home foster care was a better arrangement for most children formerly housed in the larger Homes. However, the Sisters of St. Joseph believe that there are some children from broken homes, who do not fit into a foster home, but who adjust better in a Home with other children, such as St. Anthony's, until they are ready to return to their own home. However, under the foster plan of Centacare, social workers were employed to promote foster care in suitable homes for children in Catholic Homes. In conjunction with this development, Centacare received funding from the Australian Government for 2-3 social workers to investigate Catholic Children's Homes Enquiry Service. It was an intervention programme to prevent children having to go into permanent residential care.

Meanwhile, because of the decrease in births, the greater number keeping babies and the increase in adoptions, the flow of children through St. Anthony's declined significantly. The general effects of this situation by the beginning of the '80's were (i) at St. Anthony's, the gradual vacating of nurseries formerly used for residential care of babies and toddlers, (ii) the Sisters of St. Joseph at both St. Anthony's and St. Joseph's, Liverpool Road, Croydon, responding to the foster plan by becoming 'House Mothers' to small groups of children, sometimes families, in a cottage situation.

## **Day Care**

From 1974 St. Anthony's began using the vacated nurseries by providing Day Care services for families living in the vicinity of Croydon. Children of parents needing relief on a daily basis, and of those who needed to work, a father without a wife, a mother having another child, divorced, widowed or separated parents needing children to be cared for – children in these cases were welcome at St. Anthony's, first priority being given to poorer families. By 1979 the Home had obtained the Licence to conduct a Child Care Centre.

## **St. Gerard's**

This building, north side of the Day Care Centre (Kelly Wing) has had many and varied uses:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1944-51 | Built and used as a small Maternity Hospital (10 beds) and called initially St. Anne's.  |
| 1952-63 | Nursery for about 30 cots with babies waiting for adoption.  |
| 1964-79 | Renamed St. Gerard's – a Third Schedule Hospital providing facilities for married women and babies with feeding problems, or for women and babies who needed recuperation or care after birth, or for single mothers who needed this service also.   |
| 1980    | Closed as a Hospital, together with the Mothercraft Training Centre, due to NSW rationalisation of small hospitals.  |
| 1980-85 | Child Protection Unit 'Montrose', a Government controlled service, referred to St. Anthony's families in crisis, e.g., children suffering from child abuse and other emotional and psychological distress, or parents suffering from marital breakdown. These were cared for in St. Gerard's, with the help of Centacare Social Workers. |
| 1986-   | Long Day Care Centre for infants under 2.5 years, now amalgamated with the larger similar Centre at St. Anthony's for children between 2.5 – 5 years.  |

## **Foster Care**

Simultaneous with the development of Day Care Services was the emergence in 1980 of responding to the foster plan of Centacare. Sisters of St. Joseph became 'House Mothers' to small groups of children, sometimes families, in a cottage situation. When Centacare had assessed and placed in private foster homes most of the children being cared for at St. Joseph's, Liverpool road, Croydon, and St. Anthony's, there yet remained (i) some children where fostering had broken down and who needed further rehabilitation, (ii) siblings who could not cope with being separated and who needed to be kept together as a family, (iii) and those who could not cope in a family lifestyle.

Three cottages in close proximity to St. Anthony's:

1. 12 Alexandra Ave.,
2. 8 King Edward St.,
3. 18 Monash Parade,

were purchased and suitably furnished for this new challenge to the Sisters of St. Joseph. The first two cottages were deliberately called St. Joseph's Cottages, to keep continuity for the children transferred from St. Joseph's, Liverpool Rd. The third cottage provided foster care for similar children not associated with St. Joseph's, but directed there by Centacare. In the cottages children were being prepared for fostering, some responding better than others, but a few needing longer time because of their condition of emotional distress.

## **Children in Crisis**

From about 1981 the work of preparing children for fostering has gradually decreased at St. Anthony's. Currently, only one cottage, 12 Alexandra Ave., is used for this purpose as an emergency holding centre. Children abused or neglected are initially placed here by Centacare or other Child Care Agencies. The Sisters provide temporary care until the children are ready either to return to their natural parents or ready for fostering to a normal home. On occasions, children are cared for, whose mother needs respite care which is provided at another centre of the Sisters of St. Joseph – Mary MacKillop Haven, 35 Gladesville Rd., Hunters Hill.

### **Handicapped Children (Intensive Day Care)**

A difficult work of great service to families with handicapped children was undertaken by two Sisters of St. Joseph possessed of the inspiration and courage of their forebears. This work – Early Intervention Programme for Severely handicapped Children – is for children with profound physical or intellectual disability. To begin, it depended on a number of factors, including a place to operate, qualified dedicated personnel and financial support. The place was provided by the Sisters of St. Joseph, the cottage at 6 King Edward Street, attached to St. Anthony's and formerly used as accommodation for staff since 1969. In 1979 it was remodelled and refurbished for the care and education of handicapped children (1.5 – 4.5 years), and the two Sisters were ready to start in 1980. Sr. Jacqueline Wilson conceived the idea having been trained in Victoria in Education for the Mentally Retarded; she was assisted by Sr. Lorette Sarkis, drawn to the project by her own desire to work with handicapped children. The work is staffed by a Team – a Special Education Teacher, a Child Care Worker, three other helpers, Speech, Occupational and Physiotherapists – all engaged in the individual programmes designed for each of the 12 children on a daily basis according to their needs.

Parent involvement is a key element in the programmes to help families acquire skills in relation to the sensory and motor development of their children.

The NSW Special Education Department distribute funds for the work from the Australian Schools Commission, and these need to be supplemented by fees paid by parents. However, it is the voluntary services of the Sisters of St. Joseph which allows the work to continue, and they implant in the work its spirit.

### **Residential Care for Disabled**

Between 1980 and July, 1981, Sister Carol Maher had been caring for children in crisis, preparing them for foster homes, when she became inspired with a new concept of providing residential care for disabled children. On a trial basis, she accepted a few of these children from



Grosvenor Hospital for Handicapped Children, which was willing to assist her in caring for them. So successful was the work in the first few months that a bigger house was needed, and the project was transferred to 8 King Edward. St. in March, 1982, where it has flourished since that time. The whole idea of cottage care for the disabled was quite revolutionary, anticipating the Richmond Report, 1984.

### **Multiple Programmes**

1. Residential Care (Monday – Friday)  
A group of 6 children ( 9-13 years ), 3 boys and 3 girls live-in for five days each week, attend special schools in the vicinity of St. Anthony`s and return to their natural families on week-ends.
2. Four separate and different groups of 6 children are cared for (5pm Friday – 5 pm Sunday) on a monthly basis :
  - a) 1<sup>st</sup> Week-end – severe to profound handicapped
  - b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Week-end – moderate to mild retardation
  - c) 3<sup>rd</sup> Week-end – autistic children
  - d) 4<sup>th</sup> Week-end – adolescents of varying degrees of disability.

These Week-end Respite Programmes are designed to give relief for parents, and live-in experience for each child in the group. And it is in them that the Sisters feel they are helping poorer families who are meeting their extra distress the best way they can. This service is provided for by whatever donation a family may or may not make.

In both these programmes the disabled are taught simple living skills, domestic, leisure and social, in which they show marked progress – a reward in itself especially for the disabled and also for those who serve them.

The Josephite Sisters involved in the Day Care and the Residential Care for the Disabled experience a strengthening in their own love and compassion for the disadvantaged, believing that like the poor, the disabled have an unique ability to educate their carers. Besides parent involvement with the same purposes for both projects, a common

element is the voluntary nature of the Sisters` service, the same spirit of dedication and conviction motivates them to serve families carrying the added responsibility of caring for and educating children with severe disability. True to their foundress, Mary McKillop, they bring to their work a loving compassion, joy and sense of justice to children and families with greater than normal needs.

So highly regarded by the Autistic Children`s Association of NSW that Dr. Christopher Green, Director of Child Development Unit, Children`s Hospital, Camperdown, in 1983 nominated Sr. Carol Maher and Sr. Jacqueline Wilson for the Sir Lorimer Dods Award for their outstanding contribution in serving disabled children. On their own initiative and motivated by Gospel values, these two Sisters of St. Joseph have committed themselves to work for children with particular disadvantage.

### **Current Work**

1. Single Pregnant Girls – full residential and medical care, accommodating up to 15 girls.
2. Early Intervention Programme for Severely Disabled Children 1.5 – 4.5 years ( Day Care)
3. Residential Care for Handicapped Children
4. Residential Care for Children in Crisis and pre-foster placement
5. Long Day Care :           0-2 years ( St. Gerard`s )  
                                      2.5 -5 years ( Kelly Wing )
6. Hostel for Students from country areas

### **How is the work funded now ?**

Over the past 15-20 years, as the work at St. Anthony`s took on new facets, more and more trained lay staff have been employed. As the numbers of babies and girl-mothers declined, and residential care diminished, the Sisters engaged in the work were withdrawn for other related works of the Congregation elsewhere. The nurseries and St. Gerard`s became available as a Long Day Care Centre and is entirely staffed by fully paid employees. This staff cares for 70 children, one-fifth of which are babies and toddlers ( St. Gerard`s ) and the remainder in the `Lourdes` and

`Fatima` nurseries. The level of fees is set by NSW Government, which also operates a Fees Relief Scheme for eligible parents. The costs of this work are barely met by the Government and parents` fees.

The programmes for disabled children are carried out in cottages purchased by the Sisters of St. Joseph, and supported by the voluntary services of the Sisters. The costs incurred by utilising trained specialist therapists in the work exceed the amount received from parent fees and Government subsidy. Similarly, the same situation pertains with regard to residential care for children in crisis, for the single mothers and students. In all, the fees and government subsidy amount to less than half the revenue needed to keep St. Anthony`s operating. To meet the annual deficit recurring each year the Sisters rely greatly on the generosity and goodwill of their benefactors expressed in the steady flow of donations, bequests, appeals, art unions, fetes, etc. If it were not for its generous benefactors and the voluntary services of the Sisters in reception, clerical, administration, residential care, food preparation, etc., St. Anthony`s would find it virtually impossible to operate.

It is a practice among the sisters to constantly pray for the intentions of their benefactors to their various charitable works. In times past, the Sisters were prepared to beg for their daily food for themselves and for those dependent on them. All the people using the facilities at St. Anthony`s continue to depend on the Sisters for their daily care and shelter, which is administered in the same Josephite tradition of voluntary dedication and service as their forebears.

From its inception, the Congregation of the sisters of St. Joseph has believed that anyone committed to the poor must suffer the same fate as the poor, i.e., insecurity and endurance in times of want. The other quality they share with the poor is faith in the power of God`s Providence expressed through the many loving responses of giving, manifested by generous people filled with compassion and love for those in need.

**Sisters of St. Joseph who have worked at St. Anthony`s 1952-89**

*Sr. Vincent Jones 1952-57	*Ambrosi Robartson  Ambrose Curran Donnan Kearney Brenda Keary Brendan Bollard Carmel Steinfort *Josephine Dunne	1952; 1961-64 1952-58 1952-56 1953 1954 1955-60 1957-58
Sr. Wilfrid Devereaux 1958-63	Marcellin Maloney Carmel Whybrow  Shirley O`Toole Mary Lenihan *Bernice Hunt Therese Taggart	1959 1959-62; 1965-77; 1983-now 1959 1960-63 1961-66 1961-66; 1973
Sr. Barbara Powell 1964-69	Marie T. Kennedy Monica T. McMahon Agnes Larkin  Loretto Dunne Eileen Leonard  Patrice O`Dowd  Elizabeth Maher Gennaro Waugh Doris O`Dwyer Jacqueline Wilson	1962-63 1964 1964-65 1970-80 1964 1967; 1970 1967-69; 1981-83; 1987-88 1969 1969 1970-75 1970-71; 1980-2004

Sr. Annunciata Schlitz 1970-75	Sue Loughnan	1975-79; 1981-85; 1987-88
	Eileen Lambert	1976-78
	Nano Lyons (Student)	1972
	Rosalie Matthews	1974-75
	Joan Mills	1974-76
	Rosaline Fury	1974-75
	Jean Peters	1977-79
	*Ferdinand Fuhlendorf	1975-84
	Philippa Taylor	1978-82
	Thomas Cook	1982-87
*Sr. Dolor Savage 1976-80	Margaret Wall	1980-81
	Carol Maher	1980-
	Thomasine Barnes	1980-81
	Lorette Sarkis	1980-2002
	Anne Pardy	1981-86
	Anita Laing	1983
	Margaret A. Sperring	1982-86
	Mark Boyle	1982-
	Maureen Morris	1982-
	Suzanne Lloyd	1985; 1988-
Sr. Marie Fields 1986-	Grace Hill	1984-87
	Eugene Ryan	1987-
	Antonius Abbott	1988-
	Dominica Bampton	1988-
	Sarah Hogan	1988-
	Lavinia Smith	1989-
	Mary White	1987
	Fayne Plant	1987

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July, 1989.