

6. CLUBS, SOCIETIES AND SODALITIES

Sodalities formed an important part of the life of the parish from the 1880s until the time of Vatican II. A Sodality is defined as 'a society or an association, especially a devotional or charitable society for the laity in the Roman Catholic Church'. Fogarty states that sodalities provided special training grounds for an elite within the general training of a school. They aimed at cultivating higher ideals, and stressed the obligation of self improvement, and of using one's influence for good. It was hoped that they would turn to account latent capabilities of leadership, stimulate them, and directing them to the common good. In origin they dated back to Jesuit schools in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and they came to Australia with the arrival of the religious teaching orders.

In South Melbourne important sodalities and societies included The Children of Mary and Sacred Heart and Holy Name Sodalities, the Legion of Mary, YCW, St. Vincent de Paul Conference, and the South Melbourne Catholic Young Men's Society

The Children of Mary and Sacred Heart and Holy Name Sodalities were among the strongest in Melbourne for about 40 years.

*** The St Joseph's Society was formed in 1879, and at one meeting 'the bible history was read and discussed'.

In 1885 a branch of the Holy League of Prayer was established in the parish.

In October 1887 members of the Children of Mary Sodality presented Archbishop Carr with a large Tasmanian opossum rug.

In 1887 the League of the Cross was formed, and a branch of the Sacred Heart Sodality was established; the Confraternity of Holy League of the Cross was established in 1889. ;

The YCW started here, in its foundation year of 1942, and has had several leaders who have subsequently become full-time youth leaders at headquarters.

Frederic Ozanam and a few friends met in April 1833 to decide what they could do to assist the poor. After the meeting Frederic took the remainder of his winter wood supply and gave it to a widow. The small group adopted the name **The Society of St. Vincent De Paul** after the Patron Saint of Christian charity. In its first decade the Society spread to 48 other cities in France and Italy and numbered over 9,000 members.

The first Australian conference founded in Victoria by Fr Gerald Ward at St Francis' Church, Melbourne in March 1854. Fr Ward suggested that the main reason why the first conference was established was for "the protection of male and female orphans." In a submission to the government of the day, Fr Ward stated that the new conference aimed at "the relief of the destitute, in a manner as much as possible permanently beneficial and the visitation of the poor families."

Our St. Vincent de Paul Conference, the third in Victoria, started in April 1887 and Mr. Powsey, a bank manager, was the first President. There was a lot of homelessness and neglected children in the area, so Mr Towsey and his members rented a house in Montague Street; as the numbers of children increased, they moved to 61 Nelson Road, and then to Beaconsfield Parade. The work eventually became too much for the local conference and was taken over by the Archbishop in 1890. The Cathedral eventually purchased a property in Surrey Hills, and developed the St Joseph's Home for Neglected Children.

The members of the Society continued to visit Ozanam House in North Melbourne each month until the late 1980s.

Both it and the Catholic Women's Social Guild were, and still are, an outstanding tribute to the generosity and loyalty of South Melbourne Catholics. The Legion of Mary had several Presidia working in the area. All have played a very vital part in the formation of our people.

One of the most active organizations in church activities for over a half-century, until its gradual fade-out in the 30s, was the South Melbourne Catholic Young Men's Society. It proved a notable nursery for some of the State's outstanding debaters. A number of them achieved high honours in parliamentary and municipal offices, the professions, the theatre; others in industry, commerce and sport. Mr. George Ryan, was one of the most striking examples of a true "Catholic Young Man".

