

Father Joseph Tappeiner sj ~

Director of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart ~ 1871 - 1882

Father Joseph Tappeiner sj arrived in South Australia in 1852. He was appointed Director of the Sisters of St Joseph in August 1871 replacing Father Julian Tenison Woods who left Adelaide on 1 August 1871. Tappeiner ministered in Sevenhill¹ till 1870 and then became the first Parish Priest of the newly established mission of Norwood, Adelaide. He died on 10 February 1882.

Tappeiner was widely known and respected. The panegyric delivered by Father Frederick Byrne VG stated:

In our dear departed Father the Church has lost a devoted minister, the Society of Jesus has lost a learned member, the diocese has lost a zealous priest, the clergy have lost a wise counselor and sincere friend, the religious have lost a loving father and the world has lost its greatest treasure – a just man.²

Tappeiner was born in Glurns, a village in the Austrian Tyrol on 18 December 1820. He entered the Jesuits in 1841 and was ordained on 25 June 1848. He was well educated, was “well versed in ancient and modern languages especially in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, besides possessing a profound knowledge of theology and philosophy.”³

The 1870s were difficult times for the Church in South Australia as well as for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. The Adelaide Diocese was led by Bishop Laurence Sheil osf (1866-1872).⁴ Dr Christopher Reynolds replaced Sheil, first as Vicar General and then as Bishop.⁵ Tappeiner was a stabilising influence throughout the period.

Woods composed a Rule of Life for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in May 1867 and Sheil formally approved it in December 1868. Woods and Mary MacKillop met with Sheil on 17 December of that year to discuss the Rule. The Bishop made a few changes and then gave his approval of the Rule in writing. Central Government of the Congregation was approved in the Rule.⁶

¹ Sevenhill is located 128 km north of Adelaide; Norwood is a city parish. The Congregation was founded in Penola on 19 March 1866. Penola is located 383 km southeast of Adelaide.

² *Observer*, 18 February 1882.

³ *Observer*, 18 February 1882.

⁴ Marie Foale, *The Josephite Story* (Sydney: St Joseph's Generalate, 1989), 21. Sheil “spent less than half of his five-and-a-half-year episcopate in residence in South Australia.”

⁵ Reynolds became Archbishop in 1887. He died in 1893.

⁶ Paul Gardiner, *The Life of Saint Mary of the Cross, MacKillop 1842-1909, the Official Biography written by the Postulator of the Cause for her Canonisation, Vols. 1 and 11*, (Carlton, Victoria: The Miegunyah Press, An imprint of Melbourne University Publishing Limited, 2015,) 151. Referred to henceforth as *Positio*.

Mary MacKillop was away from Adelaide and her developing Congregation for long periods during the 1870s.⁷ Bishop James Quinn, Bishop of Queensland (1859-1881), asked for Sisters to assist with education in his Diocese. On 31 December 1869 Mary MacKillop arrived in Brisbane with a group.⁸ During Quinn's absence at Vatican 1⁹ Dr Cani was his Vicar General. Differences arose between the Church leaders and the Sisters arising from pressures placed on the Sisters by the absent Quinn through Cani.¹⁰

Before Mary MacKillop left for Brisbane she had "misgivings about Father Woods' prudence". During her time in Brisbane it became clearer that "things were seriously wrong in Adelaide".¹¹ With the Sisters established in Brisbane she arrived back in Melbourne on 19 March 1871. She visited Portland and Penola and the schools enroute, arriving in Adelaide late April.¹² There she found herself "in the midst of intrigue and turmoil."¹³ Woods was not well, his debts had accumulated and given the antipathy against him he was eventually advised to leave Adelaide.¹⁴ Woods left Adelaide on 1 August 1871. On the return of Sheil and Father Horan ofm¹⁵ to Adelaide after attending the opening of a new church in Ballarat on 6 August, Sheil appointed Tappeiner Director of the Sisters.¹⁶

⁷ Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 165.

Mary MacKillop's absences from South Australia 1869 - 1883

Queensland foundation	8 December 1869 – late April 1871
Overseas	28 March 1873 – 4 January 1875
Queensland	April – September 1875
Bathurst	15 January – late February 1876
Queensland	March – July 1878
Queensland	November 18 1878 – early January 1879
Queensland and Sydney	4 April 1879 – March 1880
Sydney	January – March 1881
Sydney	7 December 1882 – June 1883

⁸ There were three other Sisters: Clare Wright, Francis de Sales O'Sullivan, Augustine Keogh; Teresa Maginess a novice; and young women Ada Braham (Mary Joseph).

⁹ Vatican 1 began in December 1869 and was suspended in October 1870. It never resumed and was closed formally in 1960 before the formation of the Second Vatican Council. Bishops were absent from their Sees, and Vicars General were left in charge of dioceses.

¹⁰ The Sisters left Brisbane in 1880. They returned in 1900.

¹¹ Gardiner, *Positio*, 115.

¹² Gardiner, *Positio*, 200.

¹³ Gardiner, *Positio*, 203.

Evidence of Fr. Joseph Tappeiner sj, 11 June 1872 in

<http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/condon/CatholicLetters/18720611.htm>

While the Bishop was in Rome Fr Keating ofm was reported of "sexual offence in the Confessional." The matter was "discovered by the Sisters and reported to Father Woods and through him, to the Vicar General. ...This was the beginning of the hatred for Fr Woods and the Sisters. It was gradually communicated to the other priests", mainly through Horan's "implacable opposition".

¹⁴ Gardiner, *Positio*, 235. Gardiner puts forward the implication that "there was an agreement among the bishops to keep him (Woods) busy away from Adelaide".

¹⁵ Horan had been in Kadina as superior of Keating when the reported assault took place. Kadina is 150 km north-west of Adelaide.

¹⁶ Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 88. The Commission of 1873 recommended the removal of Woods as Director of the Institute. Propaganda affirmed it in a directive to Bishop-elect Reynolds on 9 June 1873.

Mary MacKillop was aware of the antipathy against herself and the Sisters, as well as the proposed changes to their way of life.¹⁷ Mary MacKillop wrote to Sheil on 10 September 1871¹⁸ stating clearly that his proposed changes to the Rule were contrary to the Rule agreed upon on 17 December 1868. The changes were not acceptable. Mary MacKillop had made her vows according to the original Rule they had signed.

On the evening of 21 September Mary MacKillop visited Tappeiner at the Jesuit place at Norwood and showed him the letter to Sheil.¹⁹ Tappeiner “quite approved it”,²⁰ and with her mind reassured, Mary MacKillop returned to the Convent in Franklin Street. On the morning of 22 September Bishop Sheil visited the Convent. Mary MacKillop was excommunicated.²¹

THE EXCOMMUNICATION PERIOD

During the period of excommunication, the Jesuit priests, particularly Tappeiner and Hinteröcker as well as a number of other clergy encouraged and supported the Sisters. The two Jesuits “allowed Mary to attend Mass and receive the sacraments in their church (Norwood) because they believed her sentence was invalid and unjust.”²² They allowed her to stay overnight in the Church or in a room over the sacristy.²³ Mary MacKillop discussed matters with Tappeiner during this time and was reassured by him. He wrote her long letters. She was afraid that their care for her and the Sisters would get them “into terrible trouble.”²⁴

Mary MacKillop wrote that Tappeiner “thinks of everyone, Sisters and Brothers; his charity is of the most beautiful kind I have seen – a just, thoughtful charity. He finds out the troubles of the Sisters, those far away as well as those near, and always sends me word when he thinks I should write to them or go to see them.”²⁵ Mary MacKillop wrote to Woods that Tappeiner gave the Sisters at Gawler and Hectorville “such beautiful instructions upon the 4th vow and on the Sacred Heart.”²⁶ She told him that the “younger ones” were kept together and were to go

¹⁷ Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 91.

Mary MacKillop to Woods 19 September 1871.

¹⁸ Referred to as the *Kangaroo* letter. Mary MacKillop wrote it on the steamer *Kangaroo*, clearly stating her position in relation to the Rule of Life previously agreed on.

¹⁹ Gardiner, *Positio*, 214.

²⁰ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 19 September 1871.

²¹ The excommunication was lifted on 23 February 1872.

Gardiner, *Positio*, 221. “Father Tappeiner said that apart from the Horan faction everybody considered the sentence to be invalid, because there was no fault to start with, and no legal formality had been observed at any stage.” Tappeiner stated this in his letter to Father General (of the Jesuits) for Propaganda on 30 October 1872, note 6, 605.

Positio, Chapter 9 Part A and B addresses the Excommunication and the issues relating to it.

²² Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 98, 99.

²³ Gardiner, *Positio*, 225.

²⁴ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 11 October 1871.

²⁵ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 21 November 1871.

²⁶ Mary MacKillop to Woods, Undated, thought to be 8 January 1872. At this stage the Sisters professed a fourth vow: “to do all in their power to promote the love of Jesus, Mary

to Norwood if possible “to be near the Blessed Sacrament and within reach of regular instruction” by Father Tappeiner.²⁷ Mary MacKillop commented on Tappeiner’s care of the Sisters, “Poor Father Tappeiner has gone out today in the rain to see to their (the Sisters at Magill) comforts. He is so watchful and kind.”²⁸ She wrote of the “wonderful influence” that Tappeiner had over her: “He soothes, calms and comforts me and in a few quiet words leads my soul back to God’s dear holy Will.”²⁹ Tappeiner suggested that Mary MacKillop herself write to her mother with the “particulars of the excommunication” as her mother should know the truth from Mary herself.³⁰

A Commission of Enquiry into the affairs of the Adelaide Diocese was ordered by Cardinal Barnabo.³¹ It consisted of Bishop Murphy of Hobart and Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst. Tappeiner was asked by Propaganda “through his Jesuit superiors in Rome to send a personal report” on the proceedings.³² Tappeiner was to provide “provide straightforward information about the present state of the Church in Adelaide, and about the administration of the late Bishop.” In “this difficult undertaking” Tappeiner wrote, “trusting in God's help, (I) will do my best to give a sincere account of the matter, in the presence of our omniscient God.”

After giving the details relating to the “supposed excommunication” Tappeiner wrote:

I add only this and declare it before God: I know of no fault in any of the Sisters worthy of such a penalty. I know their minds, since I was the one person to whom they could have recourse for advice in such trials. In particular, the Sister on whom the sentence of excommunication was pronounced has in every way acted in the only way available to her in good conscience. ...

Sister Mary, on the other hand, herself conformed in every way, almost always hidden from the public gaze as if unknown. During this time her heroic virtue shone out powerfully in the manner in which she bore an affliction more bitter than any death. With the greatest humility she herself submitted and frequently exhorted her Sisters (whom she met privately in various places) to submission, humility and trust in God, or she comforted them by letter. Nothing hurt her more than when someone spoke less than

and Joseph, in the hearts of little children.” This vow was withdrawn in the 1874 *Constitutions*.

²⁷ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 12 December 1871.

²⁸ Mary MacKillop to Woods, Date disputed, Fr G O’Neil’s date, circa January 1872 (Between 19 and 23 December 1871).

²⁹ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 22 January 1872.

³⁰ Mary MacKillop to Flora MacKillop, 26 February 1872.

³¹ Gardiner, *Positio*, 224. A letter had also been sent from a group of layman associated with the Adelaide paper, the *Irish Harp*. It had been sent to Rome on 5 December 1871.

³² Gardiner, *Positio*, 250.

Gardiner, *Positio*, 623, note 13. “Father General Beckx ... had picked Father Tappeiner as a balanced and prudent man who was likely to give a fair account of the situation.” Tappeiner sent two documents, “a shorter one on 7 October and a long one on October 30”. This latter contained approximately 13 000 words.

Gardiner, *Positio*, 264. In her diary Mary MacKillop records that she saw Beckx 26 times during her eleven weeks in Rome.

reverently of the Bishop, or when his actions were attacked in the newspapers. She always feared that perhaps in her defence the authority of the Bishop might be somehow diminished. Still extant are her letters, in which she bitterly and almost inconsolably sorrows over the troubles of the Bishop, without a single word of complaint about her own sorrows. If there is any proof of solid virtue and humility, then certainly that which clearly shines forth in time of adversity must be considered all the more exceptional. In her actions we see faithfully fulfilled that most difficult of precepts: to pray for those who persecute us.³³

With the death of Bishop Sheil on 1 March 1872, Reynolds was confirmed as Administrator. He consequently appointed Fathers Tappeiner, Hughes and Frederick Byrnes his Consultors.³⁴ Tappeiner remained Director of the Institute till his death.

EXCOMMUNICATION LIFTED AND THE WAY PREPARED FOR ROME

Bishop Sheil had lifted the excommunication on 23 February 1872.³⁵ On the night of 19 March 1872 Fathers Tappeiner and Hinteröcker conducted a ceremony at which the Sisters renewed vows, Novices resumed their habits, Postulants received their habits, and Novices were professed.³⁶

The excommunication took its toll on Mary MacKillop. On 16 October 1872 she wrote to her mother, "I am not as strong as I was" but she reassured her mother of the loving care and attention of the Sisters, Father Reynolds and Father Tappeiner. These latter had given "orders regarding her diet and regularity to hours of rest". Reynolds encouraged her to go for a change, "not to hurry over anything and not to be uneasy about the Convent ... as Father Tappeiner will daily look after that."

Aware of the lack of formal canonical status of the Congregation the decision was made for Mary MacKillop to go to Rome. She wrote to the Sisters, "I am going to Rome to the feet of our Holy Father, there to implore his sanction for our holy Rule, and I go full of hope, relying for the success of the undertaking upon the prayers, good observance and charitable dispositions of each and every one of my much loved Sisters.³⁷ Mary MacKillop wrote to her mother, "I leave this mail for Rome where my superiors are sending me to petition in person for the approbation of the Holy See for our Rule." In this same letter she wrote of how Tappeiner kindly brought Peter her brother from the college at Sevenhill down to see her as Mary MacKillop herself was unable to go herself to see him. She added that Tappeiner

³³ Father Joseph Tappeiner SJ [South Australian Mission] to the Father General of the Jesuits. 30 October 1872, <file:///Users/PauineWicks/Library/Mobile%20Documents/com~apple~CloudDocs/Desktop/Father%20Tappeiner/Father%20Joseph%20Tappeiner%20SJ%20%5BSouth%20Australian%20Mission%5D%20to%20the%20Father%20General%20of%20the%20Jesuits.%2030%20Octob.html>, downloaded May 2020.

³⁴ Gardiner, *Positio*, 232. Archbishop Polding made the Reynolds' appointment.

³⁵ Bishop Sheil died 1 March 1872.

³⁶ Mary MacKillop to Woods, 23 March 1872.

³⁷ Mary MacKillop to the Sisters, 25 March 1873.

Tappeiner translated the Rule into Latin for presentation in Rome.

told her that his teachers were “much pleased with signs of desire of improvement that he now manifested.”³⁸

MARY MACKILLOP LEAVES AUSTRALIA

Mary MacKillop was away from Australia from 28 March 1873 to 4 January 1875. During that time, she corresponded regularly with the Sisters, with Tappeiner, Woods, her mother and others.

During her absence from Tappeiner kept her informed of the Sisters in Adelaide, their health and ministries and his ministry to them. He affirmed Mary MacKillop, encouraged her in her thinking and advised her. In all his advice he respected her opinion and her role as Leader of the Institute. He writes of the great pleasure her letters give to the Sisters and how they “wait for every piece of news”.

Tappeiner kept her informed regarding Woods and Church affairs in Adelaide, other Australian and diocesan news, as well as news of the Sisters in Bathurst and Queensland. Tappeiner appreciated the accounts of what she was doing.³⁹ Mary MacKillop encouraged the Sisters in Adelaide to ask Tappeiner for news of her he had received while she was away.⁴⁰ The Sisters were always free to correspond with Tappeiner and he wrote in return giving comfort, advice and encouragement. On occasions the Sisters included their letters to Mary MacKillop with those of Tappeiner’s to her.

Tappeiner wrote on 23 April 1873:

Dear Sister Mary,

This little letter, if you get it at all, will find you, I am sure in the midst of the highest contemplations among all the ... monuments of our holy Church, but all the time you will not have forgotten your poor fellow Australians as they do not forget you, and if prayers and good wishes can bring you and your cause to a happy end you will be sure of it. Now indeed you are all in the hands of our good Lord alone, now you must prove how entirely you depend on him alone, and if he should appear to you with his great cross on his shoulders as he appeared to St Ignatius and if he alone should offer it to you to carry it a little longer with him and for him, certainly you would not refuse, and not lessen your entire dependence on him ever so little. But all this you understand well so let us come to the news.⁴¹

In this same letter he wrote of visiting Kapunda,⁴² of speaking to S. Dorothea and writing to the Sisters there. He spoke of the Sisters who were not well, and that Sister Calasanctius is “doing very well and things at the convent are all right”.⁴³

³⁸ Mary MacKillop to Flora MacKillop, 26 March 1873. On 28 September 1875 Flora wrote that Tappeiner “showed fatherly kindness to Peter”.

³⁹ Gardiner, *Positio*, 323.

⁴⁰ Mary MacKillop to the Sisters, 16 May 1873. She asked that her letters be copied and sent to all the Sisters.

⁴¹ Mary MacKillop left for Rome on 23 March 1873.

⁴² Kapunda is 77 km north of Adelaide.

Tappeiner referred to affairs in Bathurst.⁴⁴ He sent Mary MacKillop a copy of Bishop Matthew Quinn's letter, saying, "you will know how to act".⁴⁵ Tappeiner stated he had letters from Vale Road and "they (the Sisters) are all so well".⁴⁶ In the 16 July 1873 letter Tappeiner referred to Bishop Mathew Quinn's letter, "This is so much more important, as this good man seems not to see the danger to the Institute if his ideas are carried out." The issue at this point was the teaching of "accomplishments", music. Tappeiner agreed with Mary MacKillop that in teaching of the latter, the Sisters "will soon lose their interest in the dirty ragged little girls and boys, they will soon forget what a precious soul there is under these rags. ... Stand firm by this principle."

Tappeiner continued in this letter of 16 July 1873, "About Central Government, I need not say any more". He gave the example of the Good Shepherd Sisters⁴⁷ and how they had flourished once the "generalate was established at Angers". He also stated that, "Many think that the Sisters of Mercy would do much better if they were united under one head." He continued, "I have written to some length to Sister Teresa (MacDonald). She says she will act upon it." Tappeiner mentioned he had letters from Vale Road and Wattle Flat and that "little troubles there, as far as I can see nothing insurmountable ... I shall write to them today."

Included in this letter was a prayer Tappeiner had composed. His intention was "to embody in it the principal virtues necessary for the Sisters". He invited Mary MacKillop to add to it or change it as she thought fit. He wrote, "Would it not be nice "to have it indulged by the Holy Father, now as you are near the fountain." He wrote of the several ceremonies in the Church during which Sisters renewed vows, were professed for the first time, and another receiving the habit. He wrote of Sisters in the country renewing their vows. These ceremonies, he wrote were preceded by a three-day retreat at which he gave them "two or three meditations a day, together with spiritual reading and silence".

Tappeiner's letter of 16 July 1873 also included details of the Sisters' work at the Refuge and their difficulties in handling the women.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, he wrote, "On the whole the Refuge gives great consolation. I think it was never doing better." He wrote of Father Reynolds' visit to Clare (South Australia) and then to Port Augusta and wrote of how he found the Sisters, "It seems he gave them great courage again

⁴³ Sister Calasanctius Howley was appointed Sister Guardian of the Institute in Mary MacKillop's absence.

⁴⁴ A Josephite foundation was made in Bathurst in July 1872. It is referred to as The Vale, given its position on Charlotte Vale Road a few kilometers out of Bathurst. The Sisters there knew that their Rule was based on central government. Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst and Bishop James Quinn of Brisbane both rejected central government.

⁴⁵ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 23 April 1873.

⁴⁶ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 20 May 1873.

⁴⁷ The Sisters of the Good Shepherd were founded in 1835 in Angers, France. They arrived in Melbourne in June 1863. Mary MacKillop's sister, Lexie joined the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Abbotsford, Victoria.

⁴⁸ Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 44, 45. Archdeacon Patrick Russell of Adelaide city area established "a House of Refuge for women and girls requiring shelter and protection. He asked the Sisters of St Joseph to supervise this new institution for a time." The Management of the Refuge stayed with the Sisters of St Joseph till 31 October 1963, "when its management was transferred to the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul."

and revived their hopes". Tappeiner kept Mary MacKillop abreast of Diocesan news: "Father Horan seems to be still in Victoria. Thank God the disunions here are gradually subsiding."

Later he wrote of Father Reynolds' appointment as Bishop and that "all well meaning people are delighted with the appointment". He also wrote that "F. Horan and F. Henderson left on the previous Sunday by the **Wild Duck** straight to London."⁴⁹

Tappeiner reported to Mary MacKillop that he was staying in Melbourne for a few days longer than he had anticipated as his staying in Melbourne "enabled me to comply with all your desires in visiting your relatives and those of S. Monica, S. Francis and S. Mary Ignatius." He visited Flora MacKillop and Maggy at the Cameron's "beautiful castle" at Coburg. Maggy was ill and he wrote:

Your sister Maggy is indeed a lovely angelical creature. Though I ordered her a Novena etc. and laid the relics of St Ignatius in the presence of Fr Mulhall on her in order to obtain through the S Heart of Jesus and St Ignatius' powerful intercession a miraculous cure, if it be the will of God, I within the bottom of my heart could not help to think she should rather as speedily as possible join the heavenly court to which her whole countenance and beautiful soul ranked her already. I gave to Mother and sister two photographs of St Ignatius', Norwood, to join themselves with you and all the Sisters of St Joseph, when prostrated before the Blessed Sacrament.⁵⁰

In this same letter he wrote of his visit to the Abbotsford Convent of the Good Shepherd where he celebrated Mass and preached. He wrote, "The Sisters and, you may suppose, your own amiable cheerful Sister Mary of the S. Heart, were highly delighted at my coming and officiating with them."⁵¹

In the letter of 10 September 1873 Tappeiner wrote:

Your last letters, two for the Bishop, Sisters, and one for myself, have arrived. That we have praised the mercy of God for all I need not tell you. So you are doing great things and will astonish the natives here! ... If we look at the whole work, it is so clearly the work of the Almighty alone that nothing can be clear. ... Is it not the greatest consolation to know that it is all the work of God alone? ... You say you have great confidence in our Blessed Lord. I know you have, but believe me you cannot have half as much as he deserves...

In this letter of 10 September 1873, Tappeiner wrote of the housing difficulties for the Novices and the urgent need for schools, "the Port Adelaide people cry very loud for a school; things are in a miserable state there," and "F. Pallhuber has at least half a dozen schools in view for his areas". Tappeiner asked Mary MacKillop

⁴⁹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1873.

⁵⁰ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 13 August 1873. He was conducting a retreat for the clergy in Melbourne.

⁵¹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 13 August 1873. Lexie (Alexandrina) MacKillop, Mary's sister became the Novice Mistress of the Sisters after her profession in February 1874. She died on 30 December 1882.

about the status of the Magdalens.⁵² It seems there had been a suggestion about gaining some form of approbation for them while she was in Rome. Tappeiner mentioned that there were many points about the Magdalens that were ambiguous, “viz their house, their relation to the Sisters, their prayer occupation, their means of subsistence, independence of their several houses, their training.” He also asked about the appointment of a Protector over all Sisters, to “lessen many difficulties”. Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda 1856 – 1874, was subsequently appointed to this role. Tappeiner concluded this letter, “So once more storm the Sacred Hearts until we all get what we want so much, i.e., greater love of God and heavenly things.”⁵³

Tappeiner wrote again, “Undoubtedly you have received letters from Queensland”. He wrote of letters from Woods to Reynolds and some of the Sisters. Tappeiner’s comment was:

It appeared to me something like our state before the storm, constant changing, sending novices and postulants away, priests complaining, and most of the things done without or een (sic) against Sr Clare. ... S. Clare did not seem to be pleased with the way Sisters were sent about. But I fear I have talked too much.”

You must now take courage, dear Sister, if the case of Father Woods should really be so bad.⁵⁴

Tappeiner’s letter of 10 October 1873 brought some pleasant news: the consecration of Bishop elect Reynolds was scheduled for 2 November. Sister Clement was very ill in the Refuge. He wrote of changes in the residence of some of the Sisters and went on to say, “They are well in Bathurst. They had five Bishops there in the convent – and got great praises - just on the Feast of the Nativity of ? (sic) the second anniversary of the Adelaide troubles.” He reported that “the feast of the Guardian Angels was kept with great spirit in the little paddock between us and the convent, about 400 children, Norwood Kensington, Hectorville, Magill North Adelaide orphans of Mitcham. The Bishop and Archdeacon were at it. ...”⁵⁵ He also stated that this letter had been sent to F Anderledy, via Vienna, “Where have you been on the 24th of September? Someone saw you on that day very very sad – was there a cross from our (Our) Lady for that day?” He concluded, “Today is the twenty first anniversary of my arrival in Australia, I am of age, now, help me by your prayers that I may grow in time.”

In his letter of 3 December 1873 Tappeiner wrote, “Whether these lines will find you, and where, I do not know. ... I need not tell you, dear Sister, what consolation your interesting letters from London after the great Pilgrimage were to all of us here. I made the Sisters copy the long letter and send copies to Bathurst and Brisbane. I know what a consolation it will be to them.” Tappeiner went on to give

⁵² Gardiner, *Positio*, 565, n 41. “The ‘Society of Magdalens of the Compassionate Heart of Mary’ was approved by Bishop Sheil in September 1869. They cared for alcoholics, the aged, and the incurably ill.”

⁵³ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1873.

⁵⁴ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1873. Mary MacKillop withdrew the Sisters from Queensland in 1880. Sister Clare Wright was the Superior of the Sisters in Queensland at the time.

⁵⁵ The feast of the Guardian Angels was celebrated by the early Sisters by bringing the children they taught and cared for together, and having games and treats.

details of the Retreat that was being held. Mary had suggested that there be retreats in different places but there was opposition to the plan because of timing, the effectiveness of the arrangements, and the availability of priests to conduct the retreats. Tappeiner wrote he could “manage” two retreats. These were attended by 29 and included both Novices and Sisters. He wrote, “The Bishop very much approved of this plan. I am sure you prayed during that times for a good success.”

Tappeiner wrote, “I had some conversations with Bishop Quinn. ... Music was his principal fixed point. ...He made a great handle of needlework, fancy things taught by the Sisters, which he thought was much more against poverty then(sic) music etc. I think he will come round yet. He did not seem to care about S. Guardian Gen.” In this letter he mentioned a conversation with the Archbishop (**Dr Polding**), “he was quite enthusiastic on this point: as long as the Sisters remain poor and humble, and mind the poor, they will do great things, but as soon as they aspire to higher things they are lost. Just the reverse of Bishop Quinn.” Polding “received favourable impressions of the Sisters”.⁵⁶

Tappeiner reported: “the difficulties of the Diocese are considerably decreasing. Nearly all the opposition party has come round. The Dominican Nuns⁵⁷ are quite reformed. Mother Catherine is sent home to Ireland. ... So you see the Sacred Heart has not forsaken our good Bishop as he has put all his trust in it. Your prayers at Paray le Monial must have helped us very much.”⁵⁸

Before concluding this letter Tappeiner wrote, “Dear Sister, we have a warm Retreat – nearly every day was over 100 degrees, and the cicadas sing day and night. If the interior heat of the heart is as great, then the Retreat must be a success – let us hope it will be so. The good Sisters show very good dispositions, so the loving heart of Jesus will not let them go without an increase of Divine love.” He concluded this letter, “I think I have told you everything worth mentioning that I could think of. ... Pray for us, dear Sister, that you soon may see all in good spirits, and you will not be forgotten here.”⁵⁹

In his long letter of 30 January 1874, Tappeiner wrote of details of the Sisters: the death of Sister Anne and her “funeral conducted by the Bishop and all the priests”. He wrote of the Sisters who were ill. He wrote about the Retreat, “I am happy to say that a good number of Sisters really aim at perfection and will so well.” The Bishop announced that the Sisters “were not to consider Father Woods as their director according to orders he had received from Rome” and that “all letters going outside of the diocese or coming thence must be seen by the Sister Guardian and F. Woods’ letters belonged to that class.” Tappeiner wrote of Sisters who had received advice from Woods in his correspondence. Tappeiner stated, “I told him (Woods) of the harm it does to the Institute. ...”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 3 December 1873

⁵⁷ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, See Gardiner, *Positio* for details of the Dominican nuns.

⁵⁸ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 3 December 1873.

Gardiner, *Positio*, 296, Mary MacKillop joined the large national pilgrimage from England, Ireland and Scotland to Paray-le-Monial in September 1873. It commemorated the bicentenary of the Apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary.

⁵⁹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 3 December 1873.

⁶⁰ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 30 January 1874. This letter was approximately 3,370 words in length.

Tappeiner referred to Sister Teresa at the Vale and that she “may have a difficult task as you fear, the very kindness of the Bishop may be the greatest temptation. Yet I do not fear that the temptation will be too great for her.” He wrote of the retreat given at the Vale by Fr Cahill, the Superior of the Jesuits in Melbourne. Tappeiner was anxious for the Sisters, as this priest “knew nothing of the Institute”. Tappeiner was afraid he “might try to influence the Sisters”. Tappeiner decided to write to Sr Teresa, “that she might understand her real position”. He added that Sister Teresa had an “attack of sun stroke” but was recovering from it.

He also wrote, “I do not know much of Queensland” but “as far as I can see, Sr Clare holds firm against Fr Woods”. There were other pieces of news for Mary MacKillop. Fr Woods had visited Mary MacKillop’s mother on his way to Tasmania; the Sisters “bring a lot of letters” for Mary MacKillop to enclose with his. He added that “Sr M Ignatius “has good crosses among the Magdalens; that the orphanage is doing very well and that they now have over 80 children; the Refuge is “very fair too, much better than when at Mitcham”. A few other snippets of news were added: “The Bishop is well, but has a fearful amount of work before him; Father O’Sullivan is dead, Fr Cleary off the ranks for drunkenness – that is sad in such a want of Priests.”⁶¹

Tappeiner’s letter of 21 May 1873 spoke of her prolonged absence - “as long as your absence is calculated for the good and the perfection of your undertaking. ... I hope you will have patience and we must try to do so.” He apologised that his communications about Fr Woods “Pain(ed) you so much. ... Yet I thought and think so still, you should know all.” He referred to Sister Angela (Carroll): “We were not deceived in her, when we thought she was sincere and that there was something wrong. She is sincere now. ... She openly declared that she willfully deceived Fr Woods, that she did do all the extraordinary things attributed to the devil. ...”

Tappeiner wrote of the constant blessings of Our Lord. There is “a steady increase, some very good postulants, yet we never have enough. The schools, I may say are flourishing. He continued, “the greater heart of the Sisters are really very good and there is no difficulty of any importance. Now is not that good news, should it not gladden your heart it is so evidently the work of God.” He mentioned that Bishop M Quinn was on his way to Europe and that she may see him. Tappeiner asked Mary MacKillop to get a supply of useful ascetical books for the noviciate and other convents; he stated that he had enclosed a letter from Donald; he gave news of Peter who was “much changed and very thoughtful”. He concluded, “Do not forget me in your holy prayers, I want them very much and let us remain fearless in the loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary.”⁶²

Mary MacKillop's time away from Adelaide increased. Tappeiner wrote on 10 September 1874:

Now really you ought to come at once you are away long enough, many of the Sisters are losing patience, it is hard to keep them up, many think nothing is really done yet, it is only beating time. ... I only wish to hurry not to frighten you. ... Many things are waiting for you. I do not like to stir in

⁶¹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 30 January 1874.

⁶² Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 21 May 1874.

anything, or to introduce anything knowing that on your arrival the work will have to be done anew.

He wrote of the Bishop going to Port Lincoln with two Sisters to establish them there. He spoke about the novices and the missions he gave, the professions of Sr M Teresa (Miss Eickhoff) and that “many other good pious girls have already made applications”. He wrote about a measles epidemic among the students and the Sisters. He reported that the Refuge and the orphanage were doing well. He mentioned that they had commemorated the third anniversary “of those ever-memorable events in Franklin Street! How clear it is now that all was intended by our loving God for a good and wise end.”

Tappeiner continued, “in Bathurst it seems things go on pretty well, they are poor, but that is no misfortune. Perhaps you have seen Dr M Quinn & converted him. ... I often hear from Sr Teresa, she seems always ailing a little but keeping her ground, the others seem very good too.” Tappeiner reminded Mary MacKillop that he had asked her to bring home “ascetical books – Rodriguez great many copies - lives - other ascetical books”. Tappeiner wrote, “we have no clear idea yet your last success was in Rome”. He had gathered though from letters sent to the Bishop and others, that a new Rule had been composed with the power of the General Chapter to approve it. He added, “this I always expected would be about the end for the present”.⁶³

Tappeiner gave news of priests arriving in Adelaide. He gave details of the Sisters who had been ill. He added, “the Blinman mine is ‘now standing still’ and with the people moving on the continuance of their school was doubtful. To support the Sisters Tappeiner had asked Fr Nevin to send potatoes and other things and that he was “keep them (the Sisters) in good condition”.⁶⁴

At the end of this letter Tappeiner reminded Mary MacKillop:

Many an earnest prayer is offered to the God of all good for you & your happy return. ... Do not forget to pray for me and all here and do not now keep us waiting longer than is absolutely necessary. You know how many hearts will rejoice at your appearance among them. ... We have made a sacrifice cheerfully but now we think we have done enough.⁶⁵

MARY MACKILLOP RETURNS TO AUSTRALIA.

Soon after her return to Australia in January 1875 Mary MacKillop began preparations for the First General Chapter. It began on 19 March of that year. Members of Congregation of Propaganda had instructed Mary MacKillop on proceedings. Bishop Reynolds presided and Tappeiner assisted as Theologian. At the Chapter the new Constitutions were accepted with Central Government of the Institute retained in them.⁶⁶ After Easter Tappeiner conducted an eight-day retreat

⁶³ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1874.

⁶⁴ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1874.

⁶⁵ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 10 September 1874.

⁶⁶ *Constitutions of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus*, 1874. “The entire Institute is governed by one Superior General.”

for the Sisters at the conclusion of which they made their profession according to the new Constitutions.⁶⁷

Mary MacKillop appreciated Father Tappeiner, writing “Let us be grateful, too, for the never tiring, always patient Father and friend our good God spares to us in dear Father Tappeiner.”⁶⁸ Mary MacKillop wrote of Tappeiner’s interest in the work of the Providence⁶⁹ in Adelaide. He “is as much interested in that work as if it depended entirely upon himself. It is such a comfort to have it near his house as nothing can go wrong whilst he is at hand.”⁷⁰

Mary MacKillop was careful about the choice of priests to lead Retreats for the Sisters. To Sister Josephine she wrote, “... if nothing else is proposed for you, let all in and about Brisbane make a quiet retreat themselves upon a plan I can get drawn up by Father Tappeiner from the Exercises, you yourself reading the appointed meditations.”⁷¹

Mary MacKillop wrote in acknowledgement of Tappeiner’s dedication to the welfare of the Sisters and their appreciation of them, “Poor old Father Tappeiner is nearly worn out. Don’t any of you be surprised if he does not write, for he is positively unable – he has too much to do.”⁷² Mary MacKillop wrote to Sister M Ignatius, “but, my own dear one, go on gently and humbly under good Father Tappeiner’s care, striving, but patiently mind, for the greater perfection of your soul in your noble vocation.”⁷³ Sister Veronica Champion wrote, “Father Tappeiner is still the same dear old Father, he has done a great deal for me for which I can never repay him.”⁷⁴ Tappeiner was most attentive to the sick Sisters. Of one Sister who was dying Mary MacKillop wrote, “Dear old Father (Tappeiner) he has been so good, coming sometimes four times a day to see her.”⁷⁵

Mary MacKillop consulted Tappeiner before making many decisions. She wrote to Sister Bonaventure at Inverell:

I have decided, with F. Tappeiner's full concurrence, to put Sister Calasactius in as soon as possible to fill not only the office of Consultor along with Sister Monica but also of Little Sister of this house (Kensington). ... Many a trying difficulty with our schools and Sisters he has lightened for me, and this also you may be quite sure F. Tappeiner has done.⁷⁶

⁶⁷ Gardiner, *Positio*, 396, 397.

⁶⁸ Mary MacKillop to the Sisters, 16 January 1875.

⁶⁹ Foale, *The Josephite Story*, 45. Woods established a House of Providence for “any young girls whose faith or virtue were in danger, and the many homeless city children who were ineligible for admission to the orphanage. ... He had almost certainly seen the House of Providence in the French village of Ars”.

⁷⁰ Mary MacKillop to Sister Josephine McMullen, 19 October 1875.

⁷¹ Mary MacKillop to Sister Josephine McMullen, 2 November 1875.

⁷² Mary MacKillop to Sister Josephine, probably 9 November 1875.

⁷³ Mary MacKillop to Sister M. Ignatius, no date provided.

⁷⁴ Sister Veronica Champion to Mary MacKillop 15 July 1873.

⁷⁵ Mary MacKillop to Sister M Baptist Molloy, 1 December 1881.

⁷⁶ Mary MacKillop to Sister Bonaventure, 30 September 1883.

Difficulties continued in Bathurst and Brisbane regarding Central Government and the authority of Bishops, Matthew and James Quinn, both Bishops having the same determination to treat the Institute of St Joseph as diocesan.

On 27 April 1875 Mary MacKillop left for a four-month visit to Queensland, calling also at Bathurst. While in Queensland she received a letter from Tappeiner:

Many thanks for your kind letter, even in the midst of your battles. May Almighty God strengthen you to bring all to a happy issue for His greater glory. I do not think the position was ever more difficult in your whole life, but our loving Lord will show you what He can do through weak instruments; so do not look at your own ability – look up to Him alone. I think the course you have adopted in making your offers and conditions to his Lordship is perfectly correct.

In a letter of 8 June 1875 Tappeiner listed various points to affirm Mary MacKillop in her thinking and to enable her to manage the situation in Queensland. That there was to be “no change in the Constitutions” was paramount.

On 11 January 1876 Mary MacKillop left Adelaide for Bathurst once again. On arrival in Melbourne she heard that Sister Teresa had died.⁷⁷ While in Bathurst she received a letter from Tappeiner, written on 15 January 1876:

Dear Mother Mary, One of the most difficult trials is before you with the death of that dear and good Sister (Teresa). You have to encounter the hardest struggle for the Institute with an opponent who has so many advantages. That certainly requires more than human strength. God alone can conquer here. Hence we must cry to Him alone, then all will lead to the best end. Yet you must do what you can.

Tappeiner “gathered a few thoughts which may possible be of some assistance”. He recognized that the most “objectionable point” was Central Government and then proceeded to provide Mary MacKillop with views which would support her in the situation. These included the conditions under which the Sisters went to Bathurst, one novitiate and the change of Sisters and the Sisters’ possession of property. He enlarged on the issue of Central Government. One of Quinn’s arguments was that Central Government would take away the affection of his children for him. Tappeiner wrote:

This is rather a childish argument – fit only to catch the sentimental, not solid Religious. These give their whole affection to God. ... (Quinn) is father to them, does he know what the next will be? Was not Bishop Sheil a good father first, and what came afterwards? Is it not safer to be united to the Holy See and protected by it?

Tappeiner presented Mary MacKillop with more and stronger arguments to support her at this time, Mary MacKillop though, having no doubts herself of her position with regard to the Constitutions and the Sisters’ rights. In February of that

⁷⁷ Mary MacKillop to Dr Kirby, 10 February 1876. Teresa MacDonald, that “dear one had faithfully upheld the Constitutions to her last breath”.

year (1876) the Institute withdrew from Bathurst, those Sisters who remained loyal to the Constitutions left Bathurst for Adelaide.⁷⁸

Tappeiner was in Melbourne in January 1877 to conduct a retreat. He wrote to Mary MacKillop, "a little concerned regarding her health". He mentioned he had a long conversation with Woods. He also told Mary MacKillop he had been to Abbotsford (the Convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd) three times and that Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart "is now all right again, and in good spirits". He concluded, "Please ask the good Sisters to pray for me, and do not forget to do the same. I often think of you, and if my weak prayers can do any good, you will always have them."⁷⁹

Mary MacKillop was in Brisbane again between April and November 1879 during which time the final withdrawal of the Sisters was determined.⁸⁰ Tappeiner wrote a number of times, aware of the expected difficulties with Bishop Quinn. He stated that as he did not know the Sisters, he could form no opinion. Again he gave details of Woods and his fears if he came to Queensland. He also gave details of the Sisters and their health.⁸¹

Tappeiner wrote again on 24 July 1879 and related "having a good conversation" with Sister Josephine who had been caught up in a public controversy in Queensland. She lost patience and acted imprudently and returned to Adelaide in July 1879. Tappeiner reported that she was sorry and that her intentions were good and suggests "to show her kindness and forgiveness will have the best effect on her". He stated he had had a conversation with Sister Calasanctius⁸² and affirmed Mary MacKillop's judgement of her as one having "good judgement, firmness, ability for business etc, but also some drawbacks. ..."

Tappeiner reported that Woods' ways "are more and more inexplicable from what Sister Josephine tells me." Tappeiner added other news: that the Bishop had arrived in London, that there was going to be another Catholic Paper in Adelaide.⁸³

Tappeiner wrote in a letter of 13 August 1879, "with regard to Queensland affairs, as I said before it is difficult to advise". He wrote some observations and clarifying points that he had made earlier; mentioned that two Sisters had made their final vows; that there were difficulties in the Penola community; and that there were clergy changes. Tappeiner had other concerns. He wrote:

You ask me to tell you everything and keep nothing from you. Well, you know my aim is to interfere as little as possible and to see and hear as little

⁷⁸ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 15 January 1876.

⁷⁹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 19 January 1877.

⁸⁰ See Margaret McKenna, *With Grateful Hearts: Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph in Queensland, 1870-1970* (Kwick Kopy Printing Geelong: Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2009).

Gardiner, *Positio*, 497. Mary MacKillop "did not want to take the Sisters away, but as each convent came under intolerable pressure, so as the Bishop told her to make way for others, she did so."

⁸¹ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 18 May 1879.

⁸² Mary MacKillop was considering appointing Sister Calasanctius as Provincial of Queensland in place of Sister Josephine.

⁸³ Tappeiner to Mary MacKillop, 24 July 1879.

as possible, as it is not in my power to make anything better. It is true in my position I cannot help seeing and hearing many things – but among these there is hardly anything new, you know them and you know my opinion. ... The want of order and regularity in the Mother House is an old complaint. ... There is a large oratory empty from one end of the year to the other. ... The present so-called community room is more like a public market. ... Many lament about profane language. ... A growing desire of secular reading – poets, ladies' journals are more liked than lives of the Saints and ascetic books. ... A good reformation seems to be needed, but when and by whom it could be brought about I cannot tell; God alone knows, He alone can help us. ... There are certainly so many good, and yet, on the whole, so little working together and so little real contentment, so little real obedience and respect for superiors. ... I see nothing worse than what you have seen yourself; things are very much the same. ... I do not despair, but as you wished me to tell you all. I just thought as well to speak without reserve.

In Adelaide Tappeiner continued his role as Spiritual Director of the Sisters and the Bishop's confidant and chief advisor. During periods in 1880 – 1883 Mary MacKillop was absent attending to the establishment of the Institute in NSW.⁸⁴ The Second General Chapter began in July 1881 and she was re-elected Leader of the Institute.

DEATH OF FATHER TAPPEINER

Mary MacKillop wrote to Sister Bernard on 7 February 1882, "We are in great anxiety and sorrow just now. Our dear good Father Tappeiner is very seriously ill, even in danger. He kept up until Saturday, could not give the instruction, but said Mass. On going back to Manresa he took to his bed. ... The doctor tells Father Peters to be prepared for the worst. ... The dear good old priest has been so kind to us that it would be a sad blow to lose him, but our loss would indeed be his gain."⁸⁵ Tappeiner died on 10 February.

On 10 February 1882 Mary MacKillop wrote to the Sisters in Sydney - directed to Sister M Josephine, "Poor Father Tappeiner's unexpected death was a great blow. You, dear Gertrude Mary, knew him and how good he always was. We had noticed he was failing for some time past but he would not give in. Fancy, he said his last Mass in our oratory the very day he took to his bed."⁸⁶

In a further letter to the Sisters on 10 February 1882 Mary MacKillop wrote:

He has gone to his reward – the reward of his many virtues and wonderful charity. ... We have lost a treasured friend and father - one who like we need not hope to meet again. In dark and trying moments – so patient, hopeful and kind? Who so sparing of himself? Who so edifying in every way? ... Our hearts are heavy but God's will be done.

⁸⁴ See Footnote No 7.

⁸⁵ Mary MacKillop to Sister Bernard, 7 February 1882.

⁸⁶ Mary MacKillop to the Sisters in Sydney - directed to Sister M Josephine, 10 February 1882.

Father Paul Gardiner writes, “with the disappearance of Father Tappeiner the diocese had lost a rock of strength that had provided the Bishop with some stability.” Tappeiner had always been a wise friend of the Institute and had the genuine good of the Church at heart.⁸⁷

Tappeiner’s death and the obsequies were documented in the *Observer* of 18 February 1882:

On Saturday afternoon, February 11, the remains of the deceased gentleman were enclosed in leaden coffin, and a procession consisting of His Lordship (Dr Reynolds) and several of the clergy was then formed, and chanting the Miserere preceded the coffin, which was removed to the convent of the Sisters of St Joseph. On Sunday afternoon it was removed again to the Church (St Ignatius Church Norwood). ...

Tappeiner’s obsequies continued on 13 and 14 February in Norwood. On 14 February the coffin was removed to St Francis Xavier’s Cathedral for the final funeral rites. On their completion the coffin was transferred to a hearse. The coffin was then transported by train to Sevenhill College. Tappeiner is buried in the Crypt of St Aloysius Church Sevenhill.

18 December 2020 marks 200 years since the birth of Tappeiner.

“He has gone to his reward – the reward of his many virtues and wonderful charity. ... We have lost a treasured friend and father ...”⁸⁸

Pauline Wicks rsj
October 2020

⁸⁷ Gardiner, *Positio*, 779.

⁸⁸ Mary MacKillop to the Sisters, 10 February 1882.