

## **Gonzaga Barry - Writings (from Eucalyptus Blossoms, May 1908**

Portland by the Southern Ocean, 24th May 1908

Feast of our Lady Help of Christians

My DEAREST CHILDREN,-

A BLUE sky,- a blue sea and "sunshine on the land," welcomes the Feast of Australia's Patroness; for, as you Loreto Children know, all Australia has been dedicated to Our Lady under the title of "Help of Christians."

It is a remarkable coincidence that on that Feast 33 years ago, the first Nuns of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (best known to you as "Loreto" Nuns) sailed for Australia.

How it came about that we commenced our long voyage to "Australia Felix" that very day is a story too long to tell you now, but I may some other day, unless, in the mean-time, I go on that longer voyage, on which no letters can be written.

One feature of this year seems to be "Jubilees"- Golden Jubilees! for they begin and end this Annus Mirabilis.

The Golden Jubilee of our Lady at Lourdes in February was the first, and the Golden Jubilee of most dear and Holy Father Pope Pius X" will, D. V., close the year with joyful thanksgivings. Between these two great Jubilees we have had our Jubilee in Mary's Mount, to celebrate the 50 years of Religious Life of our dear Mother Mary Aloysius Macken, one of the seven Loreto Nuns who came to Australia in 1875. As there will be an account of these Jubilee celebrations in another part of the Eucalyptus Blossoms, I shall give no description here of our heartfelt rejoicings with one so esteemed and loved as our dear Mother Mary Aloysius.

Fervent were the prayers offered that Our Divine Lord might leave her to work yet many years in this chosen vineyard before calling her to the Eternal Jubilee.

There are some notable events, dear Children, to take place this year, in which you, as loyal members of Holy Church, should feel a keen and intelligent interest.

First in the order of time, comes the great Eucharistic Congress to be held in London. You will have read all about it in the papers before the Eucalyptus Blossoms appears in print.

.....

Since I wrote the above I have travelled far from the shores of the Southern Ocean and the balcony of the beautiful little Portland Convent. Does not the mention of this "Portland by the Sea," touch a tender chord in the hearts of many Mary's Mount graduates, as they think, with a sigh, of "the days of happy childhood," when they watched the pearly light come over the silver sea, where soon the first beams of the rising sun turned each ripple and wave to crimson and gold.

Then the fresh pure breath of the morning air raised the young hearts unconsciously to Heaven and to God at the time of morning prayer; And oh! the scampers on the beach, bare feet playing "hide and seek" with the little waves.

The mighty sea had no terrors for the little bathers in the surf; it was a pleasant playfellow who threw up to the children the shells and the bright colored sea weed for their collections. Who could forget the walks on the Bluff, where the soft grass made a green cushion for the daisies, which grew as thickly as on an Irish field. How pleasant too were the picnics to Government Paddock among the Maiden-hair ferns! And what treasures were contained in the Doll's House, where many a childish photograph is still preserved!

No wonder, dear children, your cheeks glowed with health and your brains gained power and strength, that enabled you, now staid maidens of seventeen, to take, as you do to-day, a place in the foremost ranks of the Melbourne College, in University classes, Arts and Sciences, Higher Mathematics and Languages, and studies for the much coveted Diploma of Education. Thank God first, and then the wholesome training of early years, for "mens sana in corpore sano.'

.....

From Portland I went to Loreto, Adelaide, where two former students of Mary's Mount are doing good work teaching the Junior Classes. Around Adelaide hangs a perfume of roses; the quaint old house is surrounded by roses - roses of every kind, shade and size, from the tiniest baby rose to some blooms so large as to be pronounced "unnatural." There are standard roses, trailing roses, climbing roses which hang over arches, bowers, trees. Inside the house, roses everywhere - in the chapel - in the school. But this rose-garden in South Australia had to be left for the busy Metropolis of Victoria. Loreto, Albert Park, with its Training College. High Schools and Primary Schools was next visited.

Here, all, from the maiden who has worn her cap and gown, to the little tot who rejoices in the fascinations of Kindergarten, are eager in the pursuit of knowledge. The former, intent on mastering classical lore, solving difficult problems in Mathematics; listening intently to those splendid Lectures which elucidate so beautifully the difficulties to be met with in the Arts and Sciences. Nor is the greatest and most sublime science neglected,- the one of paramount importance which teaches what will last during the long ages of Eternity, when all other knowledge will be considered-useless. The beauty and nobility of the end for which all this learning is acquired enhances its value a hundred-fold. Each earnest student works not for self alone, but to be able to impart by the best methods all she knows to others, not disdaining to put forth all her intellectual power in teaching the very elements of Education on the true and solid basis of Religion.

She believes firmly that to lead the mind of a little child upwards to God whilst imparting secular knowledge, and helping to keep its heart pure and free from the infection of sin, is a greater work than the most learned Pagan Philosophers ever attempted. They worked for Time only, - she works for Eternity. Hence, to the true Educator, the student desirous of obtaining her degree at the University or qualifying for the Diploma of Education is not more interesting than the tiny Kindergartener who believes she has attained distinction when she knows not only how to spell "cat" but how to write it too,

or even draw it on a black-board, and whose thirst for knowledge leads her to investigate the progress of her sweet peas by frequently pulling them up to see how the roots are growing.

The time came when I must needs leave these most attractive "Halls of Learning," and speed by express to the City on the "Beautiful Harbour." The train leaves Melbourne at 5 p.m. and arrives in Sydney at 10.30 a.m. This is for the information of those who have never travelled to Sydney. You perceive, my dear children, this should rather be called a Patch-work than a letter, for it consists of bits and scraps put together in such a variety of places.

Loreto, Normanhurst, is 14 miles from Sydney City - up amongst the hills, surrounded by orange groves, and possessing a large portion of "Bush" - Australian Bush, that would in other countries be considered Forest. This bush or "Forest Primeval," is the delight of the children of Loreto, Normanhurst, abounding as it does in fern gullies, little lakes and rivulets, rocks, caves and wild flowers, - an ideal place for a picnic, which indeed often takes place there on Feasts or Holidays.

But we must not linger here in the beautiful bush - but go and see the new Loreto in North Sydney. The community from Fern Hill took possession of this property last Christmas. It is beautifully situated on the side of a hill overlooking Neutral Bay, the grounds sloping down to the water. The view from the verandah and upper windows is exquisite, looking out towards the Pacific Ocean and the "Heads," - great rocks at the entrance to the harbour between which the American Fleet passed.

I had the pleasure of being present at two very good concerts and entertainments given by the children at Normanhurst and N. Sydney.

There was a children's bazaar in the school, N. Sydney, and £40 was realized for the convent chapel in an afternoon. I would willingly have remained longer with those dear children of New South Wales, so hearty, simple, generous and affectionate, - but little voices were calling for me to return to my first dear children in Victoria. So I had to hasten back to Mary's Mount in order to spend a little time with them before they dispersed for their summer holidays. I had so many things to say to them before they returned to their homes, and which, owing to my long absence this year and last year, I had not had an opportunity of saying. So many, too, are "going home for good." May God grant that great good may come from this home-going! - good for themselves and good for all those with whom they may come in contact. May they be a comfort to their parents who hope with reason, now to reap the reward of many sacrifices, - a source of joy and abiding happiness to the home circle, an edification to all by their solid, amiable piety, good temper, helpfulness and unselfishness.

How gladly would I welcome them back again for another year, during which they could learn Domestic Science and Housekeeping, - almost impossible, except very superficially in the midst of competitive examinations. After all, dear children, when the glamour of the "Passes" and the "Honours" gained shall have faded, will not those Arts which contribute to happy Homemaking be of chief importance? The Home is woman's Realm, and there the wise, lovable and well-educated woman reigns supreme. I was greatly struck some years ago by hearing from one of our clever accomplished pupils, - at the time in her home - that, of all she had learned at Loreto, after piety, there was nothing she was so grateful for as for having learned to make brown bread!

Now it is time to finish this Patch-work, and I do so with the warmest wishes for a happy Christmas and New Year, not only for yourselves but for all you hold dear. Do all you can to make others happy even at the expense of some sacrifices; your Heavenly Father will bless you and Our Divine Lord, who at the first Christmas sacrificed so much to win for you eternal happiness, will make you happy in your own hearts.

Your affectionate Mother,  
Mary Gonzaga Barry, IBVM

Source: Eucalyptus Blossoms 24th May 1908

(Eucalyptus Blossoms was the Loreto Annual that Gonzaga Barry initiated. It circulated among all the Australian Loreto Schools and contained news, writings by the students and items of interest from Loreto overseas. Gonzaga Barry wrote an introductory letter for each edition and it was edited by senior students at Mary's Mount in Ballarat.)