

# DEATH OF REV. FATHER WOLFE

## A Splendid Priest :: The Sacerdotal Life

It is with feelings of very deep sorrow that we have to record the death of the Rev. Fr. Wolfe, of Childers. The sad event took place at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital at 8 a.m. on Thursday. The zealous priest had virtually broken down in health. He was not long ill, as he was, almost to the last few days of his life, full of energy, and he himself had no feeling that the end was so near. He attended all the exercises of the Retreat for the clergy of the Archdiocese, which was conducted by the Rev. Fr. Gartlan, S.J. His brother priests, however, saw that the health of Fr. Wolfe was far from being robust, and that there were visible indications of a constitution shattered but that there might have been hopes of prolonging a life that was zealous in the cause of God and human souls. All that the devoted care of the good Sisters of Mercy and medical skill could do was done, but the summons came, and the good priest went to meet his Creator on Thursday, October 9, and enjoy the rewards of a life of labour, happily so visible and fruitful in the priests of this country.

How dear the late Fr. Wolfe was to the priests and people of the Archdiocese may be gathered from the number who attended the solemn office and Requiem Mass at St. Stephen's Cathedral, where his coffin was placed before the High Altar on Thursday evening. Twenty-two priests were in attendance. His Grace Archbishop Dubhig was unable to be present through being at Warwick, but sent a most affectionately worded telegram to the sisters of Fr. Wolfe, who had come to Brisbane. The Requiem Mass was sung by the Rev. Fr. O'Flynn, of St. Patrick's, Valley, the Rev. Fr. Lane of Ipswich) being deacon, and the

Rev. Fr. Murphy (of Gympie) being sub-deacon. Fr. Byrne (Administrator) acted as master of ceremonies. The funeral took place at Nudgee. The orphan children met it, and walked before the hearse, whilst the Convent bell tolled the funeral knell. Fr. O'Flynn officiated at the grave, in the presence of twenty priests, a number of Sisters of Mercy, and the general public, who had journeyed from Brisbane to show their esteem for the deceased. In the death of Fr. Wolfe, the Church loses a devoted son, and the Archdiocese of Brisbane a learned, zealous, and devoted priest.

The late Fr. Wolfe was born in the beautiful County of Limerick, so rich in pastures as well as in ancient glories. The unions of old abbeys and old castles are memorable in the history of Ireland. It was close to the beautiful River Feale that Fr. Wolfe was born and passed his childhood and his boyhood. His family was one of those great Irish families that for generations has given many of their sons and daughters to the services of the Church. In those homes of virtue and piety, which go hand in hand with joy and pleasure, many a faithful son has been reared for the cowl of the monk or the cassock of the priest. Many, too, a dutiful daughter has entered the cloisters, or become a missionary in distant lands. It is one of the glories of Irish parents to see their sons and daughters devote themselves to the ancient Martyr family, and life. To one of these splendid old Irish families did Fr. Wolfe belong. The family originally came from Co. Clare, but it is now found in Limerick, Cork, and other counties. It belonged to the ancient Martyr family, and was associated with other leading princely families in the Counties of Clare and Limerick. These old families have preserved from age to age the simple faith of the Church. The Sunday Mass and the Rosary at night were the chief, if not the only, elements combined with the sacraments that were the aids to religious life in Irish homes. Not remarkable, for their simplicity of life was their arduous when the line of their vocation was once marked out for them. With what devotion and zeal and labour, have they shown the Faith to distant lands the annals of the Church for generations bear witness. They have travelled the circuit of the world in their intrepidity and their devotion, and they have taught in the schools and colleges of Europe, and gained distinction and applause in the estimation of the Church.

The family of Fr. Wolfe gave four daughters to the missionary life in this Archdiocese of Brisbane as Sisters of Mercy. Two of these Sisters in religion, as well as in blood, are at the Gympie Convent, one at Toowong, whilst Sister M. Carthage is in charge of North Ipswich School. The labours of this Sister endeared her to the people of St. Patrick's, Valley, and to the people amongst whom she laboured. The family consisted of four sons and four daughters, and the eldest brother died ere he reached the sacerdotal dignity, so that out of a family of eight, six devoted themselves to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. After attending the parochial school for a few years, it was deemed advisable to send the youthful aspirant to the priesthood, to a classical school at Lis-towel, which was conducted by Mr. Lee and a staff of lay teachers. Subsequently the youth was placed under the charge of Cistercian monks

of Mt. Melleray, Co. Waterford. Here, in this beautiful college attached to the monastery, he passed four years in his preparatory studies, previous to entering the Irish College, Rome. The life at Melleray leaves deep and lasting impressions on the students. They breathe an atmosphere of a life of prayer and a life of silence, and lay the foundation of their future life in solid piety and learning.

If Melleray was the home of his early years, Rome saw the completion of those studies which found a realisation in his exaltation to the sacerdotal state. To the student from distant land, the Eternal City is full of ancient glories and cherished memories. It is still the city, and the only city, "that joins together the two great ages of human civilisation." Pagan and Christian Rome is the attraction of the learned, the pious, and, above all, the devoted children of that Church, on whose cross the sun never sets. To it we turn with profound awe, reverence, and respect. Under its mighty civilisation it stretched its arms over all lands, and by a providential disposition it opened unconsciously the roads of the world, after having carried its legions to the missionaries of the Catholic Church. Here, in the heart of this glorious city, the student breathes daily the breath that the Church breathes over her children. Here, too, they drink of the pure crystal fountains of Faith for which the holy martyrs shed their precious blood, which, too, an innumerable host of confessors and doctors have presumed was guarded and propagated by the Roman Pontiffs. As it is the household of Faith, so is it the household of learning. Art is here glorified in the magnificence of its ancient temples, palaces of great emperors, which tell of a people and a civilisation that were worthy to be the messengers of that Faith which has been carried beyond the boundaries of that mighty empire whose banners waved and whose eagles soared over vanquished nations. It was from Rome that St. Patrick set out for Ireland and bound Rome and Ireland in the hands of unity, which all the powers of darkness could never sunder. It was from Rome, too, that St. Augustine set out for England, and brought that land under the yoke of the Church, which for a thousand years has glorified the land. And it is from Rome that all the great apostles of the Gospel to the nations have derived their mission and jurisdiction. Its colleges and schools during the ages have been the theatre of the greatest minds that the world has ever seen. It is but little wonder, therefore, that a student's life in the Eternal City is full of deep and commanding interest.

The late Fr. Wolfe passed seven years of his life in preparing himself for the priesthood, and passed a distinguished course in all the sacred subjects in which a student must be proficient. It was in the time of Leo XIII, who gave so great an impetus to the study of St. Thomas. Fr. Wolfe, too, saw the last years of Archbishop Kirby, the Rector of the Irish College, whose saintly life was spent in the services of the students of that College. At his death he was succeeded by the present Archbishop of Sydney, so that the young levite had the great advantage of receiving the guidance of two illustrious men. With Rector and students Fr. Wolfe was a very great favourite, and it was in the Irish College that he met with our Goadjutor, Archbishop Dubhig, and formed a friendship that was only severed by death.

The formal preparation for the priesthood is a very serious matter, as the priest is the very acme of Christian life. All the world could not make a priest. He is a philosopher, theologian, as well as a missionary. He must sever himself from all the lies of flesh and blood, and be prepared to go where

ever he is directed, to minister to the people in his sacerdotal character. The Catholic Church that taught the priest can alone invest him with power, mission and jurisdiction. No other power on earth can accomplish what she can do, by the hands of her bishops, in the ordination of a priest. "The priest," says an eloquent preacher, "is the man who exists neither by morality nor by philosophy, nor by the State nor by the world! What is he in fine? The priest is a man anointed by tradition to shed blood, not as a soldier, through courage, but as Jesus Christ, through love. The priest is a man of sacrifice; by it, each day, reconciling heaven and earth, and by it, each day, announcing to every soul the primordial truths of life, of death, and of resurrection. Behold, why, you children of the Eighteenth Century, when a few minutes ago sacerdotal hands elevated the sacred Host, you nourished with the proud thoughts of your age, were seized with involuntary awe, and inclined your heads, through an instinct for which I hope God will account with you."

Fr. Wolfe at his ordination fully realised the responsibility of the priesthood, and during his short life gave himself up to all its duties with zeal and devotion. This month sixteen years ago witnessed his arrival in Queensland, and the mission assigned to him was the very extensive district of Blackall, which embraced many distant towns. He was nearly always on the road, travelling about to stations, huts, and shearers' camps, everywhere carrying the Gospel of Hope to many a sunless heart. With what esteem he was held in the town of Blackall may be gathered from the fact that the citizens honoured him by electing him Mayor for two years. All who came in contact with him speak of his excellence and his judgment in dealing with men of all classes and creeds. Although a Doctor of Divinity, he never used the much coveted title of distinction, preferring to lead a life of a simple priest. The labour he endured told on his physical strength, as fourteen years of the Australian bush life must leave marks on the most robust of men. Two years ago he was transferred to Childers, and manifested that zeal and love for souls which characterised him during his previous years as a priest. His health was shattered, and was beyond human aid, and a week in the hospital left him time to prepare for his last end, if such preparation was necessary for a man of his life and character. Some one asked him if he had made a will, and his reply was that he had nothing to will, and as a matter of fact he died poor, only possessing a few shillings and his return ticket to his people. He added: "I owe a few debts, and I leave these to the charity of my good people, whom I know will pay them," and so, like Cardinal Moran, Bishop Murray, Bishop Doyle, and many more, this priest died poor in wealth, but rich in great and lasting good works. We may well say:—

"Well done, good and faithful servant. As you proved your fidelity over a few things, I will place you over many; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

### AN APPRECIATION.

BY A BROTHER PRIEST.

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priests, when, at the Mater Misericordiae Private Hospital in South Brisbane, the Rev. Maurice Wolfe gave up his soul into the hands of the Divine Master Whom he had so faithfully served. At the same time the parish of Childers was bereaved of its spiritual father, and to-day old and young mourn the loss of their kind-hearted, genial and lovable priest. The town, too, has been deprived of one of its most respected and influential citizens, one who found time, after attending to the various duties of his high office as priest, to help on every movement that contributed to the welfare of the town and district.

The late Fr. Wolfe was one of the many noble-hearted Irish priests who, leaving home and country, have come at the Master's call to this far-off land to labour for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Born in Ballylaugh, Abbeyfeale, West Limerick, on September 8, 1872, he was the youngest of a family of four boys and four girls. One brother—Patrick—is already deceased some years. The other two are still living in the old home in Ireland. The four sisters, like their recently deceased brother, have devoted their lives entirely to the service of God, migrated to Queensland, and are to-day devoting their rare accomplishments of soul and mind to the Christian education of the young in the schools of the Sisters of Mercy. Sister Mary Carthage, held in most endearing memory by parents and children in such centres as Ipswich, St. Stephen's (Brisbane), Gympie, Fortitude Valley, and Dalby, is at present engaged in a labour for which she is recognised as eminently fitted, the establishment of a Catholic school and the moulding of the young minds and hearts to a love of God and His Holy Church, in the populous and rapidly-growing suburb of Ipswich, known as the Liverpool Estate. Of the remaining three sisters, two—Sisters Mary

Ambrose and Augustine—are stationed in Gympie, and the third—Sister Mary Emilian—is at Toowoong, Brisbane.

Fr. Wolfe was ordained priest in Rome on 15th August, 1897. In November of the following year he landed in Queensland, and almost immediately set out for the most distant outpost of the diocese, Blackall, where for the next twelve years he spent the laborious and difficult life of the bush missionary. The hardships endured in the far West, especially during a season of prolonged drought, can be understood only by those who have experienced them. His fellow-priests and others who knew him in the West can recount many stories of those hard days before the train or the motor-car came to Blackall, when the only conveyance available for the energetic and zealous priest in his long journeys was the well-known rough and dusty horse-coach. Some three years ago Fr. Wolfe was called from the West and appointed to the more settled parish of Childers. With bodily health undermined, but with a spirit undaunted and a zeal unquenched, he entered his new field of labour with the same whole-souled love of the Divine Master as characterised all his labours in the vast parish of Blackall. It was not long before his genial and kind-hearted nature won for him the affection of all classes, and now that he has given up the good work, the success he attained is told aloud by all who know him, and can be read, too, in the prayers of his people and the tears of the little children.

About six months ago Fr. Wolfe was attacked by a painful and obstinate form of rheumatism. In spite of this, however, he worked on, and it was only in order to attend the annual retreat of the clergy that he came to Brisbane about three weeks ago. Then he said, and it would appear, too, that he was on the mend, but the respite

from pain was of short duration, for at the close of the Retreat he was compelled to enter the Mater Misericordiae Hospital for treatment. At once it was seen that his system had been too enfeebled by long suffering to hold out any longer. Those who loved him and knew him prayed without ceasing that Almighty God might spare his useful life. During his final illness his four grief-stricken sisters were with him. He was visited daily by the Rev. Fr. O'Flynn, parish priest of Fortitude Valley, who administered the last sacraments on Sunday, October 5. His Grace Archbishop Duhig, who had formed a close friendship with him in the Irish College (Rome), where they were fellow-students, and who ever since has had for him the highest esteem and affection, visited him frequently. His fellow priests, too, some from distant parts of the diocese, came to see him and pray for him. All that loving affection, combined with the most skilled nursing of the Sisters of Mercy, could do, was powerless to save his life, and with soul purified and strengthened by all the last sacraments, and in perfect resignation, he passed peacefully away at 8 o'clock on the morning of October 9.

His remains, vested, as is the custom always with a priest, in the sacred vestments of the Mass, and encased in a rich cedar coffin, reposed before the High Altar in St. Stephen's Cathedral from Thursday afternoon till after the Solemn Requiem Mass on Friday morning. During this time the Cathedral was visited by a stream of friends—priests and people—who came to look on the face so calm and happy in death, and to offer a prayer for the eternal repose of his soul. Early on Friday morning, besides the community Mass offered by Rev. Fr. Byrne, Administrator of the Cathedral, Masses were offered in the Cathedral for the repose of his soul by two of his relatives, Rev. Fr. Lane (of Ipswich) and

Rev. Fr. Murphy (of Gympie). At 9 o'clock the Solemn Requiem Office was chanted in choir by the following priests:—Rev. Frs. J. Byrne (St. Stephen's), Dorrigan (South Brisbane), McCarthy (Red Hill), O'Flynn (Fortitude Valley), Lee (Rosalie), O'Leary (Coorparoo), Ryan (Pittsworth), Gallagher (Enoggera), Canali (Fortitude Valley), Walsh (Woolloowin), Stapleton (Goodna), Enright (Wynnum), Gowen (Hamilton), Jordan (Nundah), McGoldrick (St. Stephen's), Kelleher (Toowoomba), Lane (Ipswich), Masterson (Ipswich), Murphy (Gympie), Cagney, C.S.S.R., and Whelan, C.S.S.R. At the conclusion of the divine office, a solemn Requiem Mass was sung.

The funeral, which included the four sisters of the deceased and several others of the Sisters of Mercy, all the abovenamed priests, and a large concourse of friends, amongst whom were many who had travelled all the way from Childers, left the Cathedral immediately after Mass for the Catholic Cemetery at Nudgee. The executive of the Southern District of the H.A.C.B. Society, who had been entertained by Fr. Wolfe, as president of the local branch, on the occasion of the annual conference of the society, held in September at Childers, were also present.

The mortal remains of the departed priest were lovingly laid to rest in sacred ground beside many of his fellow-labourers who had gone before him. The prayers at the graveside were recited by the Rev. Fr. O'Flynn, who was assisted by the large number of priests present.

We join with the whole community in extending heartfelt sympathy to the relatives of the deceased priest in Queensland and Ireland, and in praying for the eternal repose of the soul of the Rev. Fr. Wolfe.

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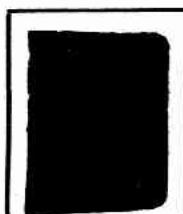
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