



## In the Spotlight

### THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE IN *AUSTRALIA*



#### **Beginnings.**

The Pallottine Fathers and Brothers arrived in Australia from Germany in 1901 as missionaries to the Australian indigenous people, in the northwest of the continent in the remote area known as the Kimberley. At first they worked in wide-ranging areas of the Kimberley establishing five mission stations and, as their numbers and work expanded, they undertook parish work in the isolated towns of Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Halls Creek and Kununurra. During the next fifty years, they established other missions in Western Australia, in the mid-west at Tardun (1928) and in the southwest in Wandering, about 145 kilometres southeast of Perth (1945). Following this, they undertook the care of the parish of Riverton in suburban Perth (1951) and established a hostel for Aboriginal students who wished to continue their studies in the capital city, (1955).

An SAC community house in Melbourne, known as the Pallottine Missionary College and intended as a house of studies for students for the priesthood, was purchased in 1938 and was supported financially by an "embryo UAC" group known as the Pallottine Auxiliary. In 1939 another group, the Pallottine Younger Set, was established to provide financial support for the work of the Western Australian missionaries. Younger Set members organised dances, picnics and various fund-raising events and at the same time, came to understand and share the spiritual ideal of the Fathers and Brothers.

Training lay people as apostles as envisioned by St. Vincent, did not commence in Western Australia but in the east in the city of Melbourne, Victoria, with the arrival in 1951 of two Pallottine priests from Germany, Fr. Ludwig Munz, later to become the SAC Superior General, and Fr. Walter Silvester. The Community House at Kew became the centre for gathering, forming and sending out lay people as apostles, into work places, professions, homes, parishes, hospitals, schools and the University. Fr. Silvester was the driving force for the establishment and inspiration of seventeen Apostolic Groups from which, between 1951 and 1971, over a thousand members came to know Pallotti's charism and mission.

Over the years, many became committed parish workers; some formed family groups; others became Youth Leaders and Lay Missionaries, and in 1957 one group of young women became foundation members of the Mariana Community, who live as consecrated secular women in the Church and in society. They support each other through prayer, liturgical celebrations of particular feasts and other gatherings. They follow a range of occupations, endeavouring to witness to the love of God in all spheres of life. After a period of formation, members pledge themselves to live, loving God and others, with the help of promises of chastity, poverty and obedience according to the Mariana way of life and, as a consecrated community, they form a core group of the UAC.

Because the house at Kew was used as a centre of formation for the apostolic groups, the SAC novitiate was moved to Sydney to the suburb of Strathfield in 1954. Then, in 1962 Fr. Silvester undertook the construction of a larger formation centre, Pallotti College, at Millgrove in country Victoria, approximately 70 kilometres from Melbourne. Originally planned for the formation of

students for the priesthood, the College has evolved over the last forty years into a training and retreat centre for school students, youth groups, diocesan priests, UAC members and special interest groups such as prayer groups, parish groups, professional in-service groups and ecumenical/cultural groups. SAC personnel, assisted by a team of lay helpers, staff the College, and other UAC volunteers come regularly at weekends to serve the many needs of retreatants and visiting groups.

Today UAC work is concentrated in two Australian states, in Western Australia and in Victoria. However, two members of the Mariana Community are currently working in Queensland, one is in South Australia, and quite a few Lay Missionaries and Volunteers have come from other states of Australia.

### **National Coordination Council.**

The Australian N.C.C. was established officially in 2004, with the election of the present Regional Superior, Fr. Ray Hevern as President, and the other four members being Fr. Dean Bradbury, UAC Coordinator; John Nagle representing the Western Australian Local Coordination Council; Maureen Rath who is President of the Eastern Australian Local Coordination Council; and Pat Heywood, the newly appointed Executive Officer for the N.C.C.

The N.C.C meets twice yearly unless, for a particular reason, a special meeting is required. Because of the geographical divide, a distance of 3500 kilometres between Perth and Melbourne, a great deal of travel and special effort are necessary to maintain contact and focus for combined action. Fr. Ray and John travel to Melbourne for N.C.C. meetings; and Fr. Dean and Pat travel to Perth for the West Australian L.C.C. meetings.

### **Membership.**

In Australia, UAC membership has always been a fluid and Spirit-led matter, with members making various acts of commitment to the apostolate. Many members of the former Apostolic Groups at Kew completed their period of formation with an act of Consecration to Mary Queen of Apostles. Lay Missionaries made a formal Commitment and received their mission crosses before taking up their missionary work in Western Australia. Members of the Mariana Community make an initial commitment, which is renewed annually.

### **Formation.**

In the past formation programs were applied to the needs and circumstances of the times: e.g. training/vocational courses for Lay Missionaries were residential and for a condensed period of time, but programs for members of apostolic groups lasted for two to three years, with regular meetings and annual retreats.

In recent times an adapted version of the formation program "Called by Name" has been used and currently, a sub-committee is planning a revised program to suit present needs.

### **Present apostolates and pastoral commitments.**

The present apostolates and pastoral commitments of the Australian UAC members are diverse and multi-faceted.

In Western Australia.

a. In the Kimberley, a Pallottine priest is chaplain at the Broome campus of the Notre Dame University which has its main campus at Fremantle.

b. In the mid-west, at Geraldton, which is approximately 350 kilometres north of Perth, UAC members undertake the work of Aboriginal Ministry. Further east at Tardun, Pallottine Brothers manage the farm and share the ex-mission buildings with senior students from nearby Christian Brothers' Agricultural School

c. In the city of Perth, SAC personnel and lay volunteers conduct Epiphany retreat centre and manage the Queen of Apostles parish at Riverton. UAC members are involved in various forms of chaplaincy: in prison, in hospital and in secondary schools..

They are also responsible for the Church's Aboriginal Ministry, and conduct seminars, feast day celebrations and open days for formation of new members of the UAC.

2. In Victoria:

a. In Melbourne, UAC members are responsible for the parish of Syndal. From this parish, formation groups such as youth leadership groups and a men's group have been established. In the Kew house, conference/seminar days are provided for ongoing formation, and efforts are in process to start initial formation with newer members. A publication, the Pallottine Family Newsletter, is a communication channel for all members.

Based mainly in Melbourne, the Mariana Community members care for the homeless, act as pastoral associates in parishes, assist Aboriginal people in country areas, teach in and serve religious education needs in parish schools and Diocesan centres, and have an active role in parish ministries such as liturgy committees, choir, Ministry of the Word, Eucharistic Ministry and multi-cultural education. One member is Professor of Nursing Sciences at James Cook University in Townsville, northern Queensland.

Other UAC members in Melbourne undertake an apostolate of prayer and seasonal Para-liturgy in their own neighbourhoods. One new initiative is the formation of the Villa Sanna Prayer Circle.

b. In country Victoria, Pallotti College at Millgrove continues to be a dynamic centre for seminars, retreats, conferences, training weekends, conventions and school camps.

Also located on the property at Millgrove are three other apostolic centres, each residential and each serving a different need. At Casa Pallotti, youth leaders and volunteers operate a family/youth program; at Montserrat, two UAC members conduct a house of prayer and at Marjorie Maria Cove, another two members welcome those in need of a place of refuge and tranquillity.

In the nearby shire of Yarra Junction, one of our Indian priests has the care of the parish and a Mariana Community member works in the parish school.

In recent years, the knowledge and following of St. Vincent's vision have spread to other areas of country Victoria. Compared to the vast distances in other states, Victoria is very small and compact: nonetheless, UAC members support their parish organizations and live out their apostolic commitments in areas as far apart as Swan Hill, 350 kilometres north of Melbourne, and Bairnsdale in East Gippsland, which is about 280 kilometres southeast of Melbourne.

**Encounters/gatherings.**

**Official gatherings:** apart from the meetings of the National and Local Coordination Councils, sub-committees operate to examine the requirements and suggestions of the General Statutes (2003).

**National gatherings:** the SAC held an Assembly in Perth in October 2003 and for the first time, invited lay people to attend. The theme of that Assembly was, "Reclaim the Dream". In January this year another National gathering was held, a UAC convention with the theme, "Together – Bringing the Dream into Reality".

**Local gatherings:** in both Western and Eastern Australia, UAC members gather for such events as seminars about St. Vincent's life and missionary activities, celebration of feast days and special occasions, e.g. Pallotti's feast-day, and special formation days of prayer and community sharing. Many Victorian members gather at Pallotti College in October for an annual reunion, a time of shared prayer and communal catching up.

Because of the vast distances in this country, one of our favoured means of encounter is through the electronic media: we are grateful for the technology which allows us, through emails, to communicate so easily and rapidly despite our geographical separation.

**Steps in growth: the future.**

The National and Local Councils recognise contemporary needs in these areas: updating of formation programs; recruitment of new members especially young members; development of a national archive; re-animating the Aboriginal ministry; and strengthening the bonds between West and East.

The UAC convention held in January 2005 gives promise of further development and growth. Action planning includes such possibilities as the holding of a Youth Convention; the recruitment of new members; establishment of new apostolic groups/teams both in urban areas and among Aboriginal people; the possibility of Indian priests working in Australian parishes and apostolic centres; the development of a new prayer manual; and establishment of a scholarship fund for theological pastoral studies for lay people.

We wish to emulate the drive and passion of Vincent Pallotti and like him, we recognise that the work of the Spirit cannot be quantified or located in one particular place. We pray therefore, together with all sisters and brothers in the UAC, for the fullness of God's love for the world and for our work.