

IX – *St Theresa Mission, Queenstown*

Simultaneously with the work among the Europeans, mission work among the Non-White population was begun at Queenstown. The Congregation acquired a piece of ground in Scanlan Street where St Theresa's School for Coloured and Black children was inaugurated in 1926, with Father Peter Hoffend as priest-in-charge of the mission.

On the morning of 12th April, at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Robinson Road, Father L Gately said the Votive Mass of St Theresa of Lisieux at St Dominic's Church and at 8 a.m. Sisters Anacleta Frizino and Emmerentia Bildstein left the Convent for the new mission. They were greeted by 15 Blackies with "Good morning, Sisters!" The same day 8 more joined them and already in May of the same year there were 40 children, 15 of whom were Catholics. Four of these latter had been baptised "in extremis" during the Great 'Flu of 1918 but had never attended the Church.

Father Hoffend advised the Sisters to remain at the school house regularly until four o'clock. So Rev Mother Johanna Pflaum sent them dinner at 1 p.m. Xhosas and Coloureds soon came to the school and, though this was before the Group Areas' Act, the Sisters realised that the races ought to be taught separately. Meanwhile Mother General Augustine Geisel arranged with the Holy See to set up a permanent convent where the Sisters could reside as from 1st May 1929. It was a semi-detached house and Mrs Haythem, who was to be their fellow tenant, proved a real help to the nuns.

Sister Magdalen McLeod was the Superior and taught the Kindergarten. Sister Honorata Albrecht, who had replaced Sister Anacleta, would teach the Coloureds and a little while later Sister Ferdinand Faisst came for the Africans. Sister Emma Wellein came to cook for them for a short while until Sister Sabina Pieronczyk arrived. At this time the roll listed 60 Coloureds and 78 Xhosas.

The large building served as school and church, with a folding partition which screened off the sanctuary during school times. After school hours the Sisters acted as catechists or visited the sick. In the belfry a bell of 300 pounds weight was installed on 18th August 1929; when it pealed forth the Angelus for the first time on that day.

One visiting afternoon Sisters Ferdinand and Honorata, on their usual beat, were accosted by a strange Black man who took them to a hut they had not previously visited. There they found an old dying heathen woman. She was in pain and said: "I know I'm dying; but I want to get all that God will give me." They spoke kindly to her then went home to report the case to the priest. Father visited the patient immediately and, after some brief instruction, baptised her. She did some hours later, happy because she was going to God.

When Sister Honorata was transferred to Indwe Sister Hilda Moloney replaced her. New classrooms were now built and the School Inspector began visiting the school. In January 1930 Sister Amalia Joder took over the sub-standards when Sister Magdalen left on transfer. When the Pallottine Brothers had finished the classrooms the school could boast of a larger staff. Sister Hilda taught the Coloureds and Sister Virgilia Meyer joined the staff for the Africans, while Sister Priscilla Gfroereis taught music and singing and acted as housekeeper for the Priest.

Mother Augustine made an agreement with the Pallottine Priests that, if their Brothers would erect the necessary buildings she had planned at the Convent of the Sacred Heart of Queenstown, she would hand over to them the property of St Theresa's Mission. The buildings were duly completed in 1934 and so, on 10th April of the year, the Title Deeds of the Mission were sent from the Mother House to Monsignor JB Rosenthal. Thus this mission ceased to belong to the Congregation but our Sisters still continued to staff the school until they were replaced by the Schoenstatt Sisters in 1945.

X - *St Joseph Mission*, Fort Beaufort

The Dominican Sisters also played a prominent part in establishing the School for Coloured Children at Fort Beaufort. It was in 1922 when Father PJ Walshe M.C. brought two little Coloured children to the Priest's housekeeper, Sister Beatrix Schoenhofer, and asked her to teach them. "Where?" asked the astonished lady. "Here in the kitchen if you like; so long as they are taught", was his rejoinder. Sister smiled and began the first lesson. Thus was born St Joseph's Mission School of Fort Beaufort.

Soon the pupils proved too many for the kitchen in the presbytery so they were transferred to a room in one of the convent cottages; and when that was filled to capacity they overflowed into the priest's garage. The grand day came at the end of 1922 when Father Walshe built a cottage whose rooms would serve as schoolrooms for the separate classes.

In 1926 St Joseph's became a State-aided School with a grant to the first Principal, Sister Frances Moosmann. Sisters Norberta Rieble and Margaret Mary Knobel succeeded her as principal teachers until, in 1931, Sister Reinhildis Thurn was assigned to this position. Despite poor health Sister Reinhildis always rallied again, to be back at her beloved St Joseph's, until she reached retiring age. By this time the roll had increased to 150 and classrooms had been added to accommodate all. The Government showed its appreciation by giving a grant to each of the four teachers, one of whom was Mrs Lillian Essop, the first Coloured secular teacher of the school.

In accordance with the Group Areas' Act the school had, in 1954, to be transferred to the district in Newton where Father P Duffy, Pastor of St Michael's Parish at the time, built a well-ventilated school with five classrooms, kitchen and storerooms, etc. More than 1285 pupils had been enrolled since those two little ones were given their first lesson in the presbytery kitchen. By 1958 there were seven teachers on the staff with an average attendance of 240 scholars. Our Sister Augustine Gysman was a former pupil of this school.

Mr Samuel Snayer and his staff of Coloured teachers have carried on the good work since Sister Reinhildis retired and left Fort Beaufort in 1962.