

✠ May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O God our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Rejoice in God's [saints](#), today and all days! A world without saints forgets how to praise. Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer, their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share.

These words, by the great twentieth-century hymn-writer Fred Pratt Green, help us to see why we remember today a group of saints known as the New Guinea Martyrs. In our Church's calendar they are, I think, the only Australian martyrs that we commemorate. I say Australian, rather than Papua New Guinean, because the Diocese of New Guinea was a part of the Australian Church until 1977 – within the lifetimes of most of us here today.

It's fitting that we commemorate these martyrs here today because this parish has significant connections with the Church in PNG. The splendidly-named Montagu John Stone Wigg, was an English priest who came to Australia to be on the staff of St John's Cathedral in Brisbane. In 1898 he was consecrated in our cathedral here in Sydney by the Archbishops of Brisbane and Melbourne and the Bishop of Bathurst. One writer notes that –

This first Bishop used no part of his official stipend for his own purposes, but, on the other hand, spent much of his own money upon diocesan and mission objects; and that when he resigned the diocese, Bishop Stone-Wigg was a poorer man, financially as well as physically, than he had been at the time of his consecration.

On his retirement after a decade of hard yakka in the tropics he moved to Burwood and lived in the house named *Colonna* at 304 Burwood Road. He didn't stand still but opened a

children's home and by December 1910, about a year into retirement, he was holding bazaars at his residence in aid of the New Guinea Mission and the Burwood Orphanage. Bishop Stone-Wigg would reside at Colonna until his death in October 1918, at the early age of 58.

And there are other connections: Our walls have a plaque that commemorates Helen Roberts, a missionary nurse and educator within the Anglican Church at Wanigela in PNG's Oro Province for 50 years. She became a citizen of PNG so that she could stay and serve the Lord's people in that place. Our walls also have a plaque to commemorate Lionel Lucas, a missionary teacher and administrator in PNG for 35 years. Former rectors also had an interest in PNG. Moya Holle tells me that she and Fr John visited PNG on several occasions. I remember Fr Kohler telling me very excitedly one day how he'd spent his diaconal year in 1970 as an ABM missionary in PNG. And just this morning at the 8.00am service, we learnt that we have a living link to the martyrs: our parishioner, Ron, is the nephew of the martyr, Fr Henry Holland.

So here in this spot, we have, as it were, PNG history, which joins us to the Anglicans worshipping today in that country as we both commemorate the same martyrs. We must not forget, though, that the Anglican Martyrs were but a small part of those who lost their lives: There were eleven Anglicans, 197 Roman Catholics, 77 United Church members, 22 Salvation Army members, 16 Lutherans, 5 members of the Evangelical Church of Manus and 4 Seventh Day Adventists – a total of 332. To that total we can add the Anglican priest, Fr Bernard Moore, who, though not a martyr, did stay in the country to look after his flock and then died of malaria as a result. He is, thus, a Confessor of the Faith.

Some march with events, to turn them God's way; some need to withdraw, the better to pray; some carry the gospel

through fire and through flood: our world is their
parish: their purpose is God.

Most of the Anglican martyrdoms took place in August 1942. The first to gain the crown of everlasting life was Fr John Barge. An Englishman, he came to Australia in 1926, and became an orchardist in the Stanthorpe area of South Queensland. He was ordained in Brisbane in 1932, and was appointed as assistant in the Parish of St James, Toowoomba. He went to New Britain in 1935. Priest at the Apugi Mission, he was killed probably earlier than August.

Second and third to offer their lives to the Lord were Fr Henry Matthews and his Papuan assistant, Leslie Gariadi, who were killed at sea on 7 August 1942, between Port Moresby and Daru. Leslie Gariadi, was an Evangelist from Boianai who had worked with Fr Matthews in Priest at Moresby. Matthews was born in Ararat, Victoria. He was over 60 when war came to Papua and he refused to leave once his military chaplaincy was terminated because of his age. He received the bishop's permission to move to Dogura, but wanted to visit Daru first to minister to isolated Christians there. He and Leslie Gariadi were killed en route.

The fourth of our martyrs to witness to Jesus was a Papuan Teacher-Evangelist from Taupota called Lucian Tapiedi. Like Leslie Gariadi, he trained as an evangelist at St Aidan's College in the cathedral centre of Dogura, right at the tip of the PNG mainland. He was killed by his own people when he stood up for the missionaries he was accompanying from Sangara and Isivita. The locals probably thought that the advent of the missionaries had brought the ravages of war to them. Lucian is commemorated on the West Front of Westminster Abbey as one of a series of twentieth-century martyrs.

Shortly afterwards, those whom Lucian Tapiedi was

accompanying became a part of the 'white-robed army of martyrs'. They were: Fr Henry Holland and John Duffill (from Isivita) and Fr Vivian Redlich, Sister Margery Brenchley and Lilla Lashmar (from Sangara).

Fr Henry Holland, was the priest at Isivita Mission and had 42 years of missionary service. He had gone to New Guinea as a lay missionary in 1910 and worked amongst coastal Papuans. In 1921 he was asked by Bishop Henry Newton to explore the Mt. Lamington area with a view to beginning work there. He chose the Sangara plateau as his centre and, after a year, had a church and school built. He came from New South Wales. With him at Isivita was John Duffill, Mission Builder. He came from Holy Trinity, Woollongaba, in Brisbane, who should have been on furlough, but elected to remain in Papua.

Fr Vivian Redlich was the priest at the Sangara Mission. Ordained in Wakefield Diocese in England in 1932, he came to Australia to join the Bush Brotherhood of St Andrew and was stationed at Winton in Queensland. He then offered for service in New Guinea and was accepted. With him at Sangara were an Australian nurse, from Holy Trinity, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, called Sister Margery Brenchley, and a teacher, Lilla Lashmar, who was from St Cuthbert's, Prospect, in Adelaide. The bodies of all these five witnesses for Christ were not recovered, as it is believed they were thrown into the sea at Buna Beach.

For many years it was said that Fr Redlich had been killed by the Japanese but this is not true: he was killed by a local. When his father, also a priest, learned about the death, he prayed publicly for his son's killer.

About 5 years ago Fr Vivian's brother, Pat, went up to Popondetta and Sangara for a service of reconciliation. It was difficult to hear Pat later recount the story of how members of

the killer's family had beaten their heads on the concrete floor of Popondetta Cathedral in shame and had given him money – which he promptly donated back to the diocese – amounting to the equivalent of many thousands of dollars, all from people who could really ill afford to make such a monetary satisfaction. Nonetheless, a sore had been excised, and the Cathedral – the Cathedral of the Resurrection – had lived up to the promise of its name.

The final group of Anglican martyrs consists of the two Gona Missionary Sisters, Sister May Hayman and Miss Mavis Parkinson. Sister Hayman was engaged to Fr Redlich. She had been a parishioner at St John's, Reid, in Canberra while she trained as a nurse. She was stationed first at Dogura, then at Boianai, before being sent to Gona. Mavis Parkinson came from the Parish of St Paul's, Ipswich, in Queensland. She was a member of the Comrades of St George, which was ABM's then youth wing. She and Sister Hayman were killed at Jegarata, near Popondetta, probably a little later in August. Their bodies were later recovered and re-buried on the old Sangara Mission Station.

Rejoice in those saints, unpraised and unknown, who bear
someone's cross, or shoulder their own: they shame
our complaining, our comforts, our cares: what
patience in caring, what courage is theirs!

Thus they died, faithful till death. They chose to remain with their flocks rather than desert them in their hour of danger. They were Martyrs for the Christian Faith. Their deaths were not in vain. Their sacrifice inspired the Church in Papua New Guinea, and it remained firm. Recovery after the war was rapid because of it. Had they deserted, much of the work would have had to begin all over again. But they were faithful, and we honour them today. Once again, the blood of the Martyrs became the seed of the Church.

In August 1946 – after the war ended, the clergy of the Diocese of New Guinea, asked their bishop, the equally splendidly-named Phillip Nigel Warrington Strong (later Archbishop of Brisbane) to appoint a day for the martyrs to be commemorated each year. By October, the Provincial Synod of the Province of Queensland commended the observance of this day to the Church in Queensland and to the wider Australian Church. 2 September was chosen because by that date it is certain that all of the martyrs had died.

Today we join with the bishops, clergy and people of Papua New Guinea as we remember these martyrs, many of whom were young adults. We give thanks for their fidelity, and for the inspiration they provide us here now, in our own time and in our own place.

Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days! A world without saints forgets how to praise. In loving, in living, they prove it is true: The way of self-giving, Lord, leads us to you.

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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