

From the Diary of Bishop John Francis Norton – 1925

Inscription....

*Diary kept for my dearest Mother
on the P. & O Steamer "Mongolia"
by John F. Norton
With the Australian National
Pilgrimage to Rome & Lourdes 1925.*

7th April, 1925

My last Mass in Australia was celebrated where my first had been - at the Brigidine Convent, Randwick. The Chapel is different, for within the last few years there has been erected a beautiful new one. Besides its foundation stone is placed on a piece of stone from the altar of St Brigid's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel. Some more business filled in the interval and about 11am we set out



for the boat. She was berthed at No 8 Wharf, Woolloomooloo - one of the numerous bays with which Sydney's Harbour is divided. It is only a few minutes by train or car from the centre of the City. When we got there, Fathers Casey, Dunne and myself - we found that the Bishop had already arrived with the Rector of St John's. A great crowd was gathering, and the ship was full of friends of the passengers. The Apostolic Delegate and the Archbishop of Sydney, as well as many priests were there to say "good-bye" to the pilgrims. Father Brosnan had been down beforehand and had arranged for the stowing of our luggage. So we shook hands with all our clerical friends and a couple of lay people - former residents of Bathurst, whom I knew, for the bell was ringing to clear the ship of visitors. Then the many coloured streamers began to be flown from the friends on shore to the friends on board, so as to unite even by this frail bond, and for the few remaining minutes, those who were so soon to be parted. Sharp at noon, the last gangway was lifted and the "Mongolia" began to move slowly from the wharf. The crowd kept moving slowly down the wharf trying to keep the paper streamers intact as long as possible. My eyes were fixed all the time on my good friends, Fathers Brosnan and Dunne who reached the very point of the wharf, and their waving and kissing of hands was the last thing that I saw.

On account of the great depth of the Harbour, the "Mongolia"- great as she is - was able to start without a tug, and to get up a fair turn of speed almost at once. So we soon ceased to be able to distinguish our friends on shore and we turned our eyes to the familiar objects that stand on the beautiful shores of Sydney Harbour, so justly famed for its great beauty. Little wonder the people are proud of it, not only because of its great depth but its great utility for commercial purposes, but particularly for the beautiful bays into which it divided, the lovely foreshores clad with trees of various tinges of green, the fine botanical gardens that run down to its very shore, and lastly the grand buildings and residences that add if possible to the charm of Nature's handicraft that enliven the shores.

At half past twelve we were sailing through the Heads - two bold promontories of rock that guard the entrance to the harbour, and we were in the Pacific at last, and the great dream of the past ten years seemed to be realised, that one day I would be outside the Heads, steering my voyage to Erin's Isle.

As the movement of the ship was making me feel a little unsecure, I did not go down to lunch, but rested in my cabin instead; however, by dinner time - 7pm - I had quite found my sea legs - as the saying goes - and from then on, I never missed my place in the dining room.