

## 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.*

### 16<sup>th</sup> May

I said Mass this morning in honour of Notre Dame de la Garde in thanksgiving for having brought us safely to land. About noon we see the French coast somewhere about Toulouse. I expect there was never a Frenchman born who was better pleased to see these shores than I am, for now if the worst comes to the worst the Bishop will have what the lowliest of his flock might claim- a coffin and a grave.

Everyone is busy packing and we had passed through the Gulf of Lyons and were well in sight of Marseilles, when I had time to go on deck. The city is superbly on the Gulf, backed by bare limestone Hills. My eye has no difficulty in finding out the prominent hill on which stands a great landmark for sailors and a shrine at which they make many votive offerings- the fine Byzantine Church of N, Dame de la Garde. The lofty bell tower is crowned with a colossal statue of Our Lady. Getting into the basin of La Jonette was a slow process and we had plenty of time to distinguish other buildings- notably the Cathedral and the Church of St Vincent de Paul.

At last we were tied up to the Quay. I was able to pick out the Bishop's brother, Father Peter, among the few who were waiting for us on the Quay. Most of these were Australian Pilgrims who had come by previous boats.

We had put the Bishop on deck and many were taking their leave of him- noticing how weak his illness had left him. He gave a good Australian answer to one man (a non-catholic who came to say goodbye). "I want to congratulate you on the good fight you have put up". "No credit to me", answered the Bishop, "I come of a fighting race".

Meanwhile Father O'Farrell and I had got the luggage passed by the Customs and got an ambulance to bring the Bishop to the Hotel at which we were to stay till the train left for Lourdes. The paving stones of the streets were uneven but by driving slowly we made the journey with as little inconvenience as possible. We then had dinner and by the time we had seen to the luggage and a sleeping compartment for the Bishop, we had to think of getting to the train. Father Farrell and I shared a compartment with the Bishop whom we made as comfortable as possible. Before long (about 9pm) we were steaming out of Marseilles. During our broken sleep we saw the names of many of the towns flash by us in the night, but as I knew we would be returning by this same railway I did not take much notice of them.

