

## **Unveiling Memorial to the late Rev. Father Smyth, O.M.I.**

### **A NOBLE TRIBUTE TO A NOBLE MEMORY.**

The solemn ceremony of unveiling a worthy memorial to the saintly memory of the late Rev. Father Smyth, O.M.I., was performed by Right Rev. Monsignor Verling, V.G., on Sunday afternoon in the Fremantle Cemetery. Notwithstanding the extraordinary tropical conditions prevailing, the vast attendance was in keeping with the memorable occasion.

Amongst the clergy present were observed: Right Rev. Monsignor Verling, V.G., and Rev. Fathers Neville, O.M.I., Hayes, O.M.I., Flynn, O.M.I., Casey, O.M.I., Benedict, O.S.B. (Fremantle), Very Rev. Father Treacy, C.S.S.R., Rev. Fathers Lynch, Gilroy, O'Neill, O'Callaghan, and Griffin. The Brothers were represented by Bro. Boland, O.M.I., and the Christian Brothers.

#### **Description of the Memorial.**

The form of memorial approved of to perpetuate the hallowed remembrance of the lamented Oblate Father, consists of a magnificent Celtic Cross, executed in polished Albany granite. The finished design, measuring some 15 feet from base to apex, won generous praise, and commanded universal admiration. Immediately underneath the cross, and gracefully wrought in golden characters, appears the following inscription, which revives a glory in its setting by the delicate intrusion of the immortal shamrock: "Erected by a grateful people to the saintly memory of Rev. Father John Smyth, O.M.I., who died at Fremantle, 7th. January, 1919, aged 46 years. Rest in peace." The octagonal kerbing in Mahogany Creek granite, lends to the picturesque enclosure an additional charm, and represents the final effort in a noble tribute to a noble memory.

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#### **Monsignor Verling's Discourse.**

Following the unveiling ceremony, Monsignor Verling, in the course of an eloquent address, paid a golden testimony to the life and labours of the saintly dead. He said he had a grateful if melancholy remembrance of the sorrowful ceremonies of well nigh two years ago in St. Patrick's, prior to their bearing with bowed heads and breaking hearts the body of their beloved pastor to its last resting place on earth. And although he had had long experience of the sorrows of the tomb, and had his own burden of grief and care over the loss of the great missionary who had been his companion and friend for over twenty years, yet he was filled with emotion at that wonderful manifestation of a people in their agony, and his heart went out in sympathy with the faithful of Fremantle. He (Monsignor Verling) was indeed proud of the privilege to be with them that afternoon, when they were honouring in a noble manner a noble priest. The late Father Smyth's name was a household word among the clergy of the Archdiocese. His zeal and devotion in the work of the sacred ministry, his tireless energy, his boundless enthusiasm in every deserving cause, made him the centre of love and admiration. How much his own devoted brethren, the good Oblate Fathers miss the happy sunshine of his presence it is beyond him to describe. Their loss must be great indeed. And you, his spiritual children, you the Catholic people of Fremantle, for whom Father Smyth toiled and prayed, feel the sense of separation. This magnificent monument which your generosity has erected to his hallowed memory will

erected to his hallowed memory will to generations to come be an eloquent if silent witness to your devotion and your love. It will be a milestone along life's rugged path, pointing the way of faith and sacrifice to your children's children. It will serve as a noble example of splendid courage, of your resolve after a high ideal to keep evergreen the memory of the beloved dead. Happy, thrice happy, is the lot of the distinguished Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate when cast amid such agreeable surroundings. This memorable afternoon you have afforded a further proof of the warmth of your admiration and your love. Looking round upon this glorious symbol of their holy Faith, he (Monsignor Verling) was lost in wonder at the surpassing grandeur, the greatness in sublime conception of this noble work of art, a work which would survive the tempest and the storm centuries after they had been gathered to decay. The Cross, the sacred emblem of man's redemption, the sign of salvation to the many, the bright ray of hope to the Christian soul, upon which his dying lips are fixed with unutterable tenderness and pity before he crosses the threshold of eternity, tells the simplest story of a God-like priest, whom you have to-day enshrined in blessed remembrance in the sight of angels and of men. He was an eminently faithful servant of the Man of Sorrows, and his name will be held in benediction for ever. Coming from the Old Land, he (the Monsignor) was reminded also that they had raised above the grave of the priest and patriot the Celtic Cross, to look on which called up from within the halls of the memory the melancholy history of his own loved "Island of Sorrow." How beautifully has one of their national poets of other days crystallised in matchless song this noble theme:

"The Celtic Cross raise o'er me, and  
the ivy round it twine,

'Twill tell the land that bore me that  
the dear old Faith was mine."

"I will tell the land that bore me that  
the dear old Faith was mine."

The late Father Smyth loved Ireland and loved it well, and it must be to his immortal spirit a source of exceeding joy that afternoon to realise that his memory will be intertwined with the remembrance of his Island Home, the cradleland of their race. He (Monsignor Verling), from the memorable event of that day, and all that it speaks for, would draw one conclusion, and it is this: that no power on earth, no! not even all the dire miseries enumerated by St. Paul, could even for one hour sever the golden bonds of Christian charity that unite priests and people. They in their forbears had been tried in the furnace of persecution, but all in vain. Linked together almost from the dawn of history in a common cause, the cause of God and country, even as the martyrs of old, purified by tribulation, unchanged and unchangeable, they remained faithful unto death. And while a people of the

striking fidelity of that vast gathering remain: while devoted priests, emulating the example of the mighty dead, hold aloft the torch of Faith, the lamp of nationality, the Catholic Church the world over, the venerable Mother of the Ages, would increase and multiply, the blessing of Heaven would attend them in this new land, and the dawn of a brighter day would arise for their kith and kin, for their sadly afflicted Motherland beyond the seas.

#### Mr. Dowling Speaks.

Mr. Jas. S. Dowling, a warm personal friend of the late Father Smyth, said:

As Hon. Secretary of the Memorial Committee, I am grateful to Father Neville for the melancholy, if happy privilege, this afternoon, of paying a simple act of filial affection over the last resting place of a life-long friend. After listening to the eloquent and golden words of Monsignor Verling and because of

the eloquent and golden words of Monsignor Verling, and because of addressing you also in God's broad acre, the home of the silent dead, there arises a passing feeling of embarrassment to which happily one might plead no stranger under other conditions and at other times. And yet withal, he would be poor indeed, an object of compassion, who failed to pay a brief and humble tribute to the saintly memory of Father Smyth. Well, when God called the would-be levite from the old home and the old people for His service in the cloister, they gave him up without a murmur or a sigh, for they were children of the Land of Saints. Long years rolled by, and then a day came when their sacrifice was rewarded a hundredfold, and when it was the untold joy of our revered Vicar General, Monsignor Verling, to witness this glorious disciple of De Mazenod, whose voice to-day is stilled in death, raise his anointed hand in benediction, and with the light of God breaking from his brow impart his first blessing to the assembled multitude, and then with tear-dimmed eyes, bidding a long farewell to all that life holds dear, set out for this distant Mission under the Southern Cross. With the Catholic people of Fremantle, the late Father Smyth's burning zeal, his tireless energy in the Vineyard of the Master, have been the theme of every tongue. His holy life, a life of sunshine, and, alas! of shadow, has been a daily inspiration to better things for each and all, until we are happy to remember him to-day as the gentle pastor, who shed a lustre round the sacred character of the priesthood during his twenty years missionary career in Western Australia. Faithful follower of the Lowly Nazarene, no wonder to find him beloved by all people and of all shrines. But what shall one say of the esteem and veneration entertained towards Father Smyth by the glory of Ireland's priesthood—the clergy of the Archdiocese of Perth? So great was their admiration of his virtues, so exalted their opinion of

so great was their admiration of his virtues, so exalted their opinion of this soggarth of the ages, that did it remain to them, with the mantle of the episcopate upon his shoulders, he would stand before the people of other climes a Prince of the Catholic Church. However, Providence had far other designs for the devoted Oblate of Mary, his destiny was writ large in Heaven's Decree, and therefore, seeing the days of his earthly pilgrimage fast drawing to a close, he left to us his children, as a precious remembrance, that he might be permitted to rest among the people whom he had learned to love. Then, in the spirit of the Christian warrior, who, mortally wounded on the field of glory, wraps his martial cloak around him and calmly awaits the end, this valiant soldier of the Cross laid himself down to die, and amid a wave of universal sorrow passed into the eternal priesthood as though his death had been a gentle sleep. We are assembled here this afternoon to pay a last public tribute to his saintly memory, and I should like to add, to mark our appreciation also of the illustrious Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, our joy, our glory, and our crown, which the lamented Father Smyth loved with a mother's love, and of which he was a gifted, a distinguished son. And in common with the Oblate Fathers, we are happy to remain indebted to the kindly Monsignor Verling, who in imitation of the Good Samaritan mentioned in the Gospel, has poured the balm of consolation into the open wound by officiating

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at this solemn and impressive ceremony. Over the grave of your dear friend and mine, he has unveiled the Celtic Cross, the glorious emblem of Faith and Fatherland, that above the moaning of the wind and the sighing of the cypress, will tell to future generations that beneath its lonely shadow, sleeping his last sweet sleep, rests all that is mortal of an enthralling personality of a

sweet sleep, rests all that is mortal of an enthralling personality of a great priest, a man of God-like charity, one of the purest and noblest patriots in the stormy history of our exiled race. May he rest in peace.

#### **Other Speakers.**

Mr. P. J. Hevron, J.P., speaking on behalf of the Catholic people of North Fremantle, was proud indeed to have been associated in the movement organised to do fitting honour to the memory of the lamented Oblate Father: In his humble opinion the late Father Smyth was his ideal of a great priest, and he firmly believed that none more deservedly popular with all creeds and classes ever landed in Australia. He was more than pleased with the eloquent tributes paid to Father Smyth by Monsignor Verling and Mr. Dowling, and he felt that their expressions gave joy to the Oblate Fathers in a special sense, and to the gathering generally. The deceased priest did noble work during the years he spent at St. Anne's, North Fremantle, and his leaving, in the effort to restore to health a shattered constitution, was deeply deplored by the members of his own flock, and by the citizens at large, was the occasion of widespread regret.

#### **Father Neville, O.M.I., Fittingly Concludes.**

Rev. Father Neville, O.M.I., on behalf of the Oblate Fathers, warmly thanked Monsignor Verling, the Vicar General, for coming at great inconvenience, to perform the unveiling ceremony. His Grace, their beloved Archbishop, would have been delighted to be with them that afternoon to enshrine the memory of his old friend in golden sentences, but as they were well aware he was paying his ad limina visitation to Rome. However, he (Father Neville) was proud to acknowledge that his place had been worthily filled by Monsignor Verling. To the clergy of the Archdiocese, their hearts went out in gratitude, and to the vast assemblage of every rank,

hearts went out in gratitude, and to the vast assemblage of every rank, of every age, and of every shrine, for their attendance. And that they might bear away with them a correct interpretation of what that gratitude means, he would but add that they (the Oblate Fathers) were privileged to live under the same roof with Father Smyth for almost a generation. He was happy to publicly announce that afternoon, and he sincerely hoped his words would not be lost upon the people of the State, that this noble tribute of a grateful people, was under the direction of the Oblate Fathers, entirely West Australian. One further golden tribute, and by no means the least, remained in perpetuity for his dear dead friend and companion, and it was easy of fulfilment, that they would often remember him before the Altar of God.