

= John O'Reily =

John O'Reily (born John O'Reilly , 19 November 1846 ? 6 July 1915) was an Australian Roman Catholic clergyman , the first Bishop of Port Augusta , and the second Archbishop of Adelaide . Born in Kilkenny , Ireland , O'Reily studied for the priesthood in Dublin . Upon his ordination in 1869 , he migrated to Western Australia , serving as a parish priest in Fremantle , and founding a Catholic newspaper there . When the Diocese of Port Augusta was established in 1887 , Pope Leo XIII named O'Reily as its first bishop . Concerned about the financial position of the diocese (which had inherited significant debt from the Diocese of Adelaide) , he accepted the posting reluctantly . As bishop , he greatly improved the financial position of the new diocese , reducing its debt by half and earning a reputation as a competent administrator .

In 1894 , O'Reily was appointed to replace the deceased Christopher Reynolds as Archbishop of Adelaide . The archdiocese he inherited was burdened with substantial debt , again left over from the old Diocese of Adelaide . Through the sale of church assets and a fundraising campaign , O'Reily was able to eliminate most of the Archdiocese 's liabilities while still investing in church infrastructure . He also actively participated in public discussions relating to education policy at a time when the role of the state in supporting religious education was topical . O'Reily publicly advocated government assistance for religious schools , stating that it was unfair Catholics paid taxes to support state schools , but received no funding for their own . In the later years of his life , poor health forced him to spend less time attending to his episcopal duties , and from 1905 , he largely retreated from public life . At his request , Robert Spence was appointed as his coadjutor and successor in 1914 , and on 6 July 1915 , he died at his house in Adelaide . O'Reily was highly regarded by many in South Australian society , with Adelaide 's daily newspapers praising his character , administrative ability and positive relations with non @-@ Catholics .

= Early life =

O'Reily was born John O'Reilly on 19 November 1846 , in Kilkenny , Ireland , the son of Michael , a military officer , and Anne , née Gallagher . He completed his primary education at the parochial school of St. John 's Parish , and spent six and a half years at St Kieran 's College . Due to poor health , he decided against pursuing a military career , and in 1864 he entered All Hallows College in Dublin to study for the priesthood . He learnt Irish , and studied mental philosophy , mathematics and ecclesiastical studies , achieving first prize in each of his classes . After being ordained on 21 June 1869 , he left Ireland for Western Australia in October , arriving in January 1870 . Having served briefly in Newcastle (present day Toodyay) and Northam , he became a parish priest in Fremantle , establishing the West Australian Catholic Record in 1874 and serving as its publisher , editor and printer from 1883 .

= Bishop of Port Augusta =

Following a recommendation from the first plenary council of Australia and New Zealand in 1885 , in May 1887 Pope Leo XIII elevated the Diocese of Adelaide to an Archdiocese and metropolitan see . As a suffragan diocese to Adelaide , the Pope established the rural Diocese of Port Pirie , naming O'Reilly as its inaugural bishop . Upon his appointment , O'Reilly travelled to Adelaide , where he met with the Archbishop of Adelaide Christopher Reynolds and the Cardinal of Sydney Patrick Moran to discuss the formation of the new diocese . The poor financial state of the Archdiocese made the discussions contentious , with O'Reilly concerned about the amount of debt Port Augusta would inherit from Adelaide . To ensure a sufficiently large population for the new diocese , Moran suggested that its boundaries be altered from those drawn up by the Pope , but Reynolds opposed this plan . Dissatisfied with the outcome of the discussions , O'Reilly decided to travel to Sydney to deliberate further with the Cardinal , prompting Reynolds to write to Moran :

" If the Holy See would think well of giving the entire colony of South Australia to the care of Dr O'Reily , [sic] I would offer no opposition to it and would gladly enter a monastery and spend my few

remaining years in preparation for the end ! "

On 27 October , O 'Reilly wrote to Pope Leo XIII requesting permission to reverse his decision to accept the appointment to Port Augusta , believing he would be unable to administer a diocese with such significant debt and such a small , impoverished population . In addition , he wrote , he had no personal wealth to contribute to the finances of the diocese . The concerns O 'Reilly raised prompted Cardinal Simeoni of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to call for an official church inquiry into the financial situation of the South Australian dioceses . The report found a total of almost £ 38 @, @ 000 of debt , with the new Port Augusta diocese bearing £ 18 @, @ 000 . Following the report , O 'Reilly 's request was refused , and on 1 May 1888 , he was consecrated in St Mary 's Cathedral in Sydney . Later that year , in an effort to save time while signing documents , O 'Reilly removed an " l " from his surname .

Although the Sisters of St. Joseph operated eight primary schools in the Diocese of Port Augusta , it was without a Catholic high school ? boarding or otherwise . Accordingly , while he was staying in Sydney for his consecration , O 'Reilly sought to establish a convent for the Sydney @-@ based Sisters of the Good Samaritan in Port Pirie . At the bishop 's expense , the order 's Mother @-@ General spent two months in Port Pirie , and once she had found appropriate living quarters , a school was established , teaching over 100 students . A convent for the sisters was completed in 1890 on the same block as the school .

Upon his return to South Australia , O 'Reilly immediately set about improving the financial situation of the Diocese of Port Augusta . He requested financial assistance from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith , and divided the diocese into fund @-@ raising districts , campaigning for contributions in each of them . With the permission of Archbishop Thomas Carr in Melbourne , O 'Reilly toured parishes in Victoria asking for funds for his new diocese . By 1893 , he had reduced the diocesan debt by half , with his peers describing him as a " practical , clear @-@ headed man of business " due to his administrative ability .

While Bishop of Port Augusta , O 'Reilly showed an interest in education policy . He authored a pastoral letter on the matter in March 1889 , and the next year gave a speech criticising the lack of government funding for Catholic schools . According to O 'Reilly , it was unfair and unjust that Catholics paid taxes to support state schools but received no government support for their own . O 'Reilly 's views on education were frequently cited when the Free Education Bill (which aimed to make state schools free) came before the South Australian Parliament in 1890 , but the cost of the scheme meant that the bill was not passed . Although there was some discussion of funding for religious schools when the bill was reintroduced the next year , these proposals failed to gain significant parliamentary support , and in 1891 , the bill was passed without assistance for religious schools .

O 'Reilly suffered a long and serious illness through early 1894 and continued to suffer from migraines throughout the year , forcing him to delegate many of his duties to James Maher (his vicar general) and John Norton (an official consultor) who would later become , respectively , the second and third Bishops of Port Augusta .

= = Archbishop of Adelaide = =

After suffering a two @-@ year illness , Archbishop Reynolds died in June 1893 , and by January 1894 , rumours of O 'Reilly being appointed as his successor were published in Port Augusta papers . Although he dismissed such speculation , a letter of appointment arrived from Rome in March , naming him as the next Archbishop of Adelaide .

= = Archdiocesan finances = = =

As Bishop of Port Augusta , O 'Reilly had fought to minimise the debt inherited from the old Diocese of Adelaide . Having reduced the new diocese 's debts by half in his six years as bishop , upon becoming Archbishop of Adelaide , O 'Reilly found the rest of the old diocesan liabilities awaiting him , their size having actually increased . In 1895 , he presented a report on the state of the

archdiocesan finances to the Sunday congregation in St. Francis Xavier 's Cathedral , revealing total liabilities of just over £ 37 @, @ 000 . O 'Reily reckoned £ 10 @, @ 000 could be paid off by selling land owned by the Archdiocese . Two weeks after his address , a meeting of Adelaide Catholics supported moves to liquidate the archdiocesan debts , with £ 3 @, @ 600 pledged at that meeting , including £ 1 @, @ 000 over four years from O 'Reily himself , a significant portion of his income .

Since the sale or mortgaging of church land required an act of Parliament , in 1896 , the South Australian Parliament unanimously approved The Catholic Church Endowment Society Incorporated Sale of Lands Bill . This allowed the Archbishop to make good on his intention to sell all diocesan land not used for church purposes , and over the next few years , land , surplus vestments and works of art owned by the Archdiocese were sold off . These sales , combined the efforts of the Archbishop and diocesan priests to secure donations from around the Archdiocese , meant that by 1901 O 'Reily was able to report that the debt had been reduced by three @-@ quarters . This had been achieved at the same time as expenditure was being made on new schools , churches and other diocesan buildings . In fact , O 'Reily noted in his report for that year that the remainder of the debt could have been removed had expenditure been cut , writing :

" Were we but willing to check our expansion and in checking it , check our expenditure as well , the last vestige of our debts would speedily have disappeared . Living things must grow , however . Our churches , our schools , our charitable institutions must expand and multiply . We have future needs to provide for as well as at present . "

= = = Education policy = = =

As Archbishop , O 'Reily continued his participation in public discussions regarding education . In 1896 , a colony @-@ wide referendum sought to gauge public opinion on state education , scripture reading in state schools , and the provision of capitation grants (fixed grants per student) to non @-@ state schools . O 'Reily weighed into the debate in The Register , giving conditional support to scriptural instruction in state schools , so long as the teachers themselves were religious and Catholic students received instruction from Catholic teachers . On the subject of a capitation grant , O 'Reily was strongly supportive , arguing that moral impediments prevented Catholics from using secular education , and that , since religious schools provided elements of secular education as well as religious instruction , they should receive government assistance . At the referendum , South Australians affirmed the system of free secular education , but rejected scriptural readings in schools and the capitation grant .

O 'Reily blamed the Labor Party for the loss of the capitation grant . According to O 'Reily , the serving Premier Charles Kingston could have been convinced to support the grant were it not for the objections of Labor , with whom Kingston had formed a coalition government . In 1899 , in the lead @-@ up to that year 's general election , O 'Reily gave a speech criticising the Labor Party , accusing some Labor leaders of having " an evident disposition to crush [Catholic labourers] with successive burdens . "

= = Later life and legacy = =

In 1904 , O 'Reily travelled Europe to make his ad limina visit to Rome , and to visit his native Ireland where he was made a freeman of Kilkenny . Due to poor health , from 1905 , O 'Reily kept to himself in his house in Glen Osmond , leading to the local press referring to him as the " Recluse of Glen Osmond " . Increasingly , his episcopal duties were fulfilled by Bishop of Port Augusta John Norton , who would have to visit the more remote parts of O 'Reily 's see on his behalf . As he became more frail , O 'Reily would ask certain priests to accompany him when he travelled , among whom was the Dominican prior Robert Spence . When O 'Reily requested a coadjutor in 1913 , he chose Spence as his first preference for the role . Despite the reluctance of some clergy to the appointment of a religious as Archbishop , Spence was consecrated as coadjutor , with right of succession , in August 1914 . O 'Reily died on 6 July 1915 at his house in Glen Osmond , and was buried under a large Celtic cross at the West Terrace Cemetery .

During his time as Archbishop , O 'Reily had formed positive relationships with many senior members of South Australian society , including the Anglican Bishop of Adelaide Nutter Thomas , and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia , Samuel Way , who considered him a friend . In an editorial in 1913 , The Advertiser praised O 'Reily , lauding his administrative abilities and crediting the good relations between Protestants and Catholics in South Australia to his " broadness of mind and to his quiet determination to avoid all unnecessary controversy . " Upon his death , The Register gave a glowing editorial , describing him as " loveable and highly estimable " , a " hard hitter " and asserting that , had he not been a religious leader , he could have been " a leading financier , Imperial legislator or even an eminent military commander . "