

Vocations legacy

Support for vocations to the priesthood is just one of the legacies of Dean Louis Michael Travers who left significant funds to the Archdiocese and other Catholic organisations when he died in 2002.

Known for his frequent praying for vocations during his lifetime, Dean Travers was a strong supporter of the Manly Union, an alumni organisation of St Patrick's College, Manly, which was devoted to the care of priests and the encouragement of vocations to the priesthood.

This was a subject very dear to him, according to his cousin, Sr Kathryn Travers RSM, who said the Dean was always praying for vocations, particularly among the younger Travers family members, and always wanted a prayer for vocations included at family Masses.

In addition to the Archdiocese's vocations program, three Catholic schools, a Catholic hospital and agencies serving the disadvantaged were among the beneficiaries of Dean Travers' will.

Born in Jamestown, Louis was one of eight children, two of whom died as youngsters from peritonitis and glandular fever.

He was educated at Sacred Heart College, Somerton, and his priestly studies began at Springwood and Manly Seminaries in New South Wales. He was then sent to Rome to study Theology but when World War II broke out in 1939, he was compelled to return to Australia and finish his Theology course back at Manly Seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Beovich on July 26, 1942, in St Francis Xavier's Cathedral.

After the ceremony he went straight down to Goodwood to anoint his ailing great uncle, William Travers who said he would never die until he had been anointed by Louis.

His first appointment was as Assistant Priest at Mt Gambier. In January 1946, Archbishop Beovich appointed him a Professor and Bursar at St. Francis Xavier's Seminary, Stradbroke Park, then only in his fifth year of priesthood. With the coming of the Vincentian Fathers to staff the seminary in 1952, Fr Louis was made Assistant Priest at Goodwood.

In 1956 he became Parish Priest of Hectorville where he had to cope with the needs of a fast growing parish and primary school. The Dean's only surviving immediate family member, Yvonne Speck, said her brother was a "great builder", the Church of the Annunciation at Hectorville being testament to this.

In 1967 he became Dean of Mt Gambier Parish. The same year he was elected to the first Senate of Priests for Adelaide.

In 1974 he was transferred to Salisbury, also a rapidly expanding Parish. He gained a lot of publicity for blessing Thomas More College from a helicopter in 1978.

From 1981 to 1995 his final appointment was as Parish Priest of Richmond. At Richmond he had a stained glass window installed, depicting Our Lady of Knock.

Dean Travers was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services to education: Tenison Woods College in Mt Gambier, Thomas More College, St Augustine's at Salisbury and Holy Family at Parafield Gardens owe their existence or development to his vision, zeal and tenacity.

On April 24, 1995 Dean Louis resigned as parish priest of Richmond and retired with the title Pastor Emeritus to live at Glenalta where he was well cared for by his devoted housekeeper, Nancy Mills. They later moved to another home at Bellevue Heights.

The Dean died peacefully at home on December 18, 2002. Two days before Christmas his funeral was conducted at St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral. He was laid to rest in the Navan Cemetery, near Riverton, alongside his parents.

- If you have information on someone who has bequeathed to the Catholic Church or if you are interested in making a bequest, contact Jane Juniper on 8210 8223 or email her at jjuniper@adelaide.catholic.org.au