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NEWSLETTER & PROGRAM FOR 2016 03 MARCH

THE DATE: Tuesday 8th March 2016

VENUE: KwaMuhle Museum, Bram Fischer Road [Ordnance Road] Durban.

TIME: Meeting commences at 17h30; Refreshments will be served from 16h45.

PARKING: Off Bram Fischer/Ordnance road [next to the Museum]; security person is present

FEATURE: **THE BARN SWALLOWS AT MOUNT MORELAND**-Roy Cowgill and Stephen Davis

The swallow roost at Mount Moreland has over the years been considered a notably large roost. When the new airport was proposed and later developed there was great concern on the impact of this new development on one of the larger Barn Swallow roosts in KZN. The presentation is about the monitoring work that was done to understand the possible dynamics of the roost and any possible impact that the new airport would have on the roost and on a migratory species. Migratory birds such as the Barn Swallow can be great indicators of environmental change so ensuring safety of the species in its 'winter' quarters is essential.

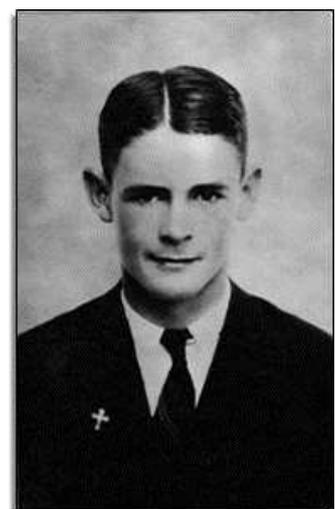
REPORT BACK ON FEBRUARY MEETING:

DENIS HURLEY AND THE GREAT DICTATORS: A REFLECTION ON HIS STUDIES IN ROME IN THE 1930s by Paddy Kearney.

A measure of the importance of this highly entertaining yet incredibly important presentation can be gauged from the publication of much of what Paddy had to say in the Mercury a few days later. This was followed the next day with some excellent publicity photos of many of the society's members and visitors who attended that evening. What wonderful publicity for our dynamic group.

It's a good time to reflect on Denis Hurley's life just after the celebration of the Centenary of his birth on 9 November last year, and just a few days before the 12th anniversary of his death on 13th February 2004.

"Denis Hurley and the Great Dictators" focused on Hurley's time in Rome from 1933 – 1940 - not exclusively on his studies for the priesthood but on the whole experience of being there during those pre-war years. Of particular interest is how that experience formed him into a different person from the 17 year old recently matriculated South African school boy who set out for Ireland in January 1932 just weeks after finishing his matric exams to where he would do his Novitiate with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This was training for life in a religious order or congregation, and he spent about 18 months on this training at a place called Cahermoyle. But a message came from his bishop in South Africa, Henri Delalle, instructing that Denis Hurley be sent to Rome, an early sign that Delalle had his eye on Denis Hurley as a potential successor.



**Brother Denis
Eugene Hurley
Passport Photo**

***For those who would like to learn more about Cahermoyle follow the website link at the end of the paper.*



Foro Romano, Colosseum & Surroundings
Photo created by Danny Boy stitching several shots together - ex Wikipedia

After the long journey from Ireland to Rome, young Brother Denis Hurley was delighted to discover that the Oblate International Scholasticate where he would be living for the next seven years was just metres from the Colosseum on the one side and on the other, very close to the ruins of the old Roman Forum. He was beside himself with excitement to be in such an historic part of Rome, and right at the centre of things in the Catholic Church.

Once over that excitement, Brother Hurley faced a major language problem. He immediately went into a seven day silent retreat during which all the sermons were given in French, the language of the International Scholasticate. He knew no French! No sooner had he come out of that experience than he was plunged into lectures at a University known as the “Angelicum” (now St Thomas’s University). These were all delivered in Latin. Well he had studied Latin at school – but these lectures were on the most complicated subject - Philosophy.

There was a third language challenge. Making your way on foot through the streets of Rome to reach the University you had to quickly learn Italian, especially if you wanted to know what the papers on the newsstands were saying - or to have conversations with ordinary Italians! So, three foreign languages to be learnt simultaneously. And there was a fourth language of which he needed to have a rudimentary grasp for the sake of biblical studies – and that was Hebrew – he really struggled with that, perhaps because the alphabet was so different.

Part of the stimulation of being in Rome was studying with the brightest Oblate candidates for the priesthood from the US, Canada, Spain, France, Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, South Africa and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). You will have noticed several English-speaking countries, so he did have opportunities to speak English. The two Sri Lankans were particularly interesting for Denis Hurley: before they had decided to become priests, one of them had completed a doctorate at Oxford and the other a doctorate at Cambridge. They provided Hurley’s first contact with black intellectuals. It must have had a huge impact on his thinking – they were in every way a match for the brilliant Hurley! He had the new experience of having to respect people of a different colour.

By the time he had completed his three years of philosophy he discovered that it had helped him to think through problems to their very essence, which would stand him in good stead later on in life.

OBSERVING FASCISM IN ACTION

It was not long before Denis Hurley was writing home with observations about Mussolini’s fascists. Their “black shirts” seemed to be everywhere. And he saw them every day as he walked with other

students to the Angelicum University. “The whole Italian nation is mad with Fascism. Every second man in the street, quite literally and without exaggeration, wears some kind of uniform, principally the black-shirt variety. Soldiers carry rifles, revolvers, bayonets. Policemen sport sabres, rapiers, daggers and revolvers. A regular armoury is attached to each fellow’s belt. Even little boys are togged-out in black-shirts and wellington boots. The whole nation. Seems a bit childish, doesn’t it?”

And right behind the Oblate Scholasticate there was a hall where fascist bands used to have extremely loud practices:

“As I write, a Fascist band is practising a few martial airs. This is Sunday and the Fascists set aside the Sabbath as a day for military training for civilians, and for serenading the morning air in the good old savage style. They may talk about peace in Geneva, but they glorify war in Rome.”

FIRST SIGHT OF MUSSOLINI

When Brother Hurley saw many posters in the streets advertising a rally that Mussolini would address, he decided to go along with another student, Joseph Fitzgerald [later Archbishop of Johannesburg], to observe this rally in the Piazza Venezia next to Mussolini’s office.

“We found the Piazza full of people shouting ‘Duce, Duce, Duce (pronounced DOO-chay’, inviting Mussolini to come out and address them. After quite a long period, the French doors opened from the office to the balcony and out came Mussolini, alone. He stood there, looked at the crowd, threw up his hand in the Fascist salute. Left and right there were more cries of ‘Duce’, so that he held up his hand for silence ... and began to speak. He had a rather husky voice at this time. He’d been a great shouter and very eloquent public speaker, a rabble-rouser in his young days.”

In describing another Mussolini rally, when the Fascists were, as he wrote rather amusingly,

“celebrating the birthday of their party with the usual amount of banging and shouting, Mussolini gave a discourse from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, his official residence. His speech must have been broadcasted all over the city as we heard him from our house, half a mile away. I could not hear very much of what he was saying, each phrase was cut off from the next by the tremendous roar from the audience. ‘Voi siete Italiani’ (You are ITALIANS! – long and prolonged applause – ‘E non soltante Italiani, ma Romani (and not only Italians but ROMANS! Terrific yelling – “E non soltante Romani, ma Fascisti.’ !! Ear-splitting shrieking, a few of the audience explode and disappear in smoke!])

HITLER’S STATE VISIT

Adolf Hitler, another of the Great Dictators, came to Rome on a six day state visit starting on 3 May 1938, to cement the alliance between Italy and Germany. A big military parade took place along the Via dell’Impero, a broad modern road between the Colosseum and the monument to Victor Emmanuel. Hitler was given a place of honour in the reviewing stand as the troops paraded before him and Mussolini.

That morning Hurley was in the study hall of the International Scholasticate, close to where these events were taking place. One



of his fellow scholastics came running in and said: “Come quickly. You can see Hitler from the roof.” Hurley’s reply was: “No, I’m not going. I don’t want to see that man.” And explaining this stance, Hurley said later: “By that time ... we knew that Hitler was already something of an embodiment of evil. We didn’t know about his attitude to the Jews, but we knew that he had taken up the cudgels ... against the Catholic Church ... I was very convinced of [his] evil influence in Europe at that time and saw him as a person to be utterly avoided”

THE ONE MAN WHO COULD STAND UP TO MUSSOLINI

There was just one man in Rome who could stand up to Mussolini and Hitler, and that was Pope Pius XI, whom Brother Hurley described as “a real fighter”. He had initially been quite favourable to Mussolini but he came to recognise what a dangerous person he was. As for Hitler, Pope Pius XI would have nothing to do with him. Hearing that Hitler wanted to visit the Vatican during his state visit in May 1938, Pius XI showed his total disapproval of the Nazi dictator by leaving Rome for his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, saying: “I cannot stay in Rome with a man who has raised the crooked cross against the cross of Christ.” It was most unusual for the Pope to go to Castel Gandolfo in May – he normally only went there in July and August, but he was determined to make his point. He also gave instructions that the Vatican museums should be closed and no member of Hitler’s party be allowed into the Vatican.

Pius XI had written special encyclical letters against Hitler and Nazism, entitled “Mit Brennender Sorge” (with deep anxiety) the harshest criticism ever made of any political regime. Hitler was furious. Earlier there had been a similar critique of Mussolini and his brand of fascism. That was entitled “Non Abbiamo Bisogno”, a condemnation of fascist totalitarianism. The Pope was outraged about the way Catholic youth movements were being harassed and even banned.



At the time that Pius XI died he had just prepared another even more scathing attack on Hitler and Nazism. This was suppressed by his successor, Pope Pius XII and never made public though it is now available for all to see. No wonder Hurley, much later in life, described Pius XI as the second greatest pope of the twentieth century – second only to Pope St John XXIII, the roly-poly Pope who called the Second Vatican Council.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS:

Another great influence on Hurley during his years as a student in Rome was the Young Christian Worker movement started by a Belgian priest, Father Joseph Cardijn. Cardijn gathered young people from the factories who were working under appalling conditions, to reflect on their lives through a method known as “See Judge Act”, in which the young people would observe the conditions under which they were made to work, assess what was happening to them in the light of the Gospels – and then discuss what sort of action they could undertake to bring about change. Hurley thought this was a perfect recipe for Christian social action. He would like to have become a chaplain to YCW groups when he returned to South Africa. Instead he was chosen to head up a seminary at the age of 29 and then in quick succession to become a bishop at the age of 31, archbishop just 4 years later, and in the same year elected to head the SA Catholic Bishops’ Conference.

CONCLUSION:

As mentioned at the beginning, Denis Hurley was a very different person when he came back to SA in July 1940 after his years in Rome. Five things, in particular, made him different:

- Studying and living with brilliant black people;
- Observing how fascists treated the ordinary Italian people – so similar to the way black people were treated in South Africa at that time;
- Witnessing a pope standing up bravely against the Great Dictators of that era;
- Making a special study of the Church's social teaching and writing his dissertation on economic oppression;
- Learning about the simple but highly effective method of bringing about social change, the SEE JUDGE ACT method.

Years later, reflecting on his studies overseas, Hurley said that he had left South Africa 'very much as a white boy'. When he returned in 1940, he discovered that all the social teaching he had learnt in Rome challenged 'in a most striking way ... the racial situation in South Africa.' He was ready, at least at an intellectual or cerebral level, to take up the cudgels. He was still a long way from being the activist he would become in later life.

<http://www.limerickdioceseheritage.org/Ardagh/sitesCahermoyle.htm>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Hurley_\(bishop\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Hurley_(bishop))

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The society was delighted to confer Honorary Life Membership on two long standing and serving members at the February Meeting. Leon Nicholson was given a certificate recording the award whilst Joan Law who is rather frail and confined to her Moth retirement home will be given hers by Ian Smith shortly. Leon appealed to everyone to see that SA National Society publicised its affairs in as many places as possible and added that this had been a cry from his first days on the committee.

100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF VERDUN 21st February 2016

Verdun was as important to France as the Battle of the Somme (and of course Delville Wood), was to Britain and her Dominions and allies. In fact the Battle of the Somme took place to take pressure off France at Verdun. There is an excellent story on the Daily Telegraph so click this link:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/france/articles/the-horrors-of-verdun-revisited/>

PHILANI DLAMINI – 2016 BURSARY WINNER

We welcomed Philani Dlamini who is a Methodist Minister from Umlazi to his first SA National Society meeting where he gave members a brief synopsis of his background and what he doing as the society's bursary winner for 2016. Not only did many members meet Philani and his brother but it was great to have a theologian asks questions about another when Paddy Kearney finished his presentation. We look forward to seeing you at further meetings and learning more as your thesis develops.



**Philani Dlamini – Kathrine
Fenton-May Hardy Wilson
Photo by Sanabelle**

HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY – An Appeal for Information and Help

The society in KZN will be 110 years old in 2017 and we are planning to produce our own short history to mark this milestone. But does anyone have any information, photographs, early newsletters or journals, newspaper or magazine clippings and such like that will help provide information of any kind towards this? Robert King has provided photos of the first Killie Campbell Fundraising Dinner thirty plus years ago which is the sort of material we need. Donal McCracken has provided copies of the very first SA National Society annual reports which contain brief comments about Natal. Liz Ralfe has donated a set of SANAS news. We have been loaned Killie Campbell's biography and we have access to old files at the museum.

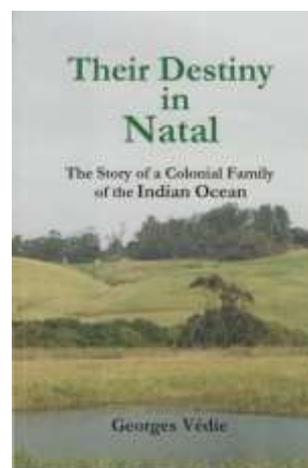
The Help Part – would someone like to step in and handle this project or even work together as part of a team please? Hardy Wilson - 071 746 1007 or email hardy.wilson@telkomsa.net .

BOOK REVIEW

***Their Destiny in Natal* by Georges Védie**

The story of a Colonial Family of the Indian Ocean

In 1877 Hippolyte and Pauline Lavoipierre arrived at the British Colony of Natal in South Africa. With limited capital and some experience gained in Mauritius Hippolyte set about establishing himself as a sugar planter in the Inanda District, then the developing agricultural heart of the colony. They also came burdened with a number of family secrets. This book examines the couple's complex Franco-Mauritian backgrounds from their origins in France, their grandfathers and fathers experiences in the various colonies of India, Mauritius and the Seychelles and their own struggle to make a success of their lives in Natal. It examines the roles of trade, slavery and indentured labour in their ventures and in the development of 19th century Mauritius and Natal. The surprising disregard of conventions in conservative colonial societies, the financial risks of plantation agriculture and the hidden issue of miscegenation come to light through the experiences of a particular family.



Georges Védie was born in 1955 in Boston, U S A to a French father and a South African mother of Franco-Mauritian origin. The author has a degree in history and geography from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and taught those subjects for twelve years before going into property management.

The combination of fully understanding French and English and being a historian and geographer explains the author's ability to provide the detailed, complex and fascinating explanations in the first chapters of mainly Middle Class life in France in the days of the *Ancien Regime* and through the French Revolution. It covers the period when Mauritius and most of the other Indian Ocean Islands went from being under the control of France to Britain. It covers the consolidation of the numerous sugar plantations and mills there during the 1800's. Later chapters provide more information about the family and life in Natal. In one volume we have a consolidated history that has earned a place on the bookshelf.

This meticulously researched and splendidly written book can be purchased from Amazon Books UK, www.amazon.co.uk , www.Lulu.com , and others for about R300 including postage (which seems to be working for now, albeit slow, about 4-8 weeks). Just Google the title and various options will appear. Hardy Wilson