



**Daniel Mannix, John Henry Newman,
Catholic higher education and the idea
of a residential college**

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From the moment he arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1913, Daniel Mannix worked tirelessly to increase Catholics' participation in higher education as part of an unceasing effort to improve the fortunes and strengthen the faith of Catholic Australians.

In particular, Mannix was the driving force behind the establishment of two Catholic university residential colleges in the Oxford tradition envisioned by Blessed John Henry Newman. Right up until his death in 1963 at the age of ninety-nine, Mannix was working to establish the second of these Catholic residential colleges at the new Government funded university located within the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Ultimately Mannix succeeded in that endeavour despite resistance or indifference shown by certain elements at the universities and within the Church. It was a major achievement in public leadership of the kind that made Mannix the best known and most respected churchman — as well as most controversial — of his time in Australia.

The establishment of Newman College at the University of Melbourne and Mannix College at Monash University represents a triumph and an enduring legacy of Mannix's belief in the value of higher education and his determination to achieve his goals. It was a victory, moreover, won against odds that lengthened due to the rise of secularism in Australian society during the latter part of the twentieth century.

Mannix, who moved to Australia at the age of forty-nine, was eminently qualified to found university residential colleges in the city of Melbourne. His own academic career had been impressive: he rose to become a professor in Ireland's leading seminary before going on to head the

¹ In preparing this paper, the author has drawn principally on the published work of Emeritus Professor Gabrielle McMullen FRACI, B.A. Santamaria, Colm Kiernan, and Michael Gilchrist and the unpublished work of Robert McPhee. He acknowledges with respect the debt he owes to their scholarship, and acknowledges also the additional assistance of Professor McMullen, who kindly read and commented on a draft of this paper. Thanks also to Angela Gehrig and Geraldine Woodhatch of The Allan and Maria Myers Centre and Richard Overell of the Monash University Library.

institution where, among many other scholarly distinctions, he gained the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Long before he came to Australia, Mannix sought to find ways to bring the Church closer to the wider world of higher education. Historian Colm Kiernan notes that “As President of St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Mannix strove to improve the quality of the education of Irish priests so that all ordained from St. Patrick’s College also graduated from an Irish university.” Robert McPhee writes that the move to impose an obligation on theological students “to undertake University examinations including the B.A. degree” was made “Against some opposition among more senior professors and theologians at Maynooth”.

Shortly before the arrival of Mannix in Melbourne, Archbishop Thomas Carr recalled in the Melbourne Catholic newspaper *The Advocate* visiting Maynooth, and meeting Mannix there:

2

He is held in the highest esteem, not only for his personal qualities, but for his great learning and administrative capacity [...]. When in Dublin, I was talking to Dr Walsh, the Archbishop, on the subject of a possible Coadjutor and mentioned the name of Dr Mannix, Dr Walsh did not like the idea of losing such a tower of strength in the cause of education.

Mannix brought the same energy and drive to Australia that he had sustained for some two decades at Maynooth. Kiernan notes that, in his approach to education, Mannix on his arrival in Australia was building on foundations laid by others before him and he was also adapting to local conditions:

Mannix did not deny the contemporary Australian Catholic orthodoxy, which stressed Catholic primary and secondary education. Nor was his insistence on the need also for tertiary education wholly new, for Archbishop James Alipius Goold, the first Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, had taken the first step in 1861, reserving land for a Catholic University College; and St John’s College was already in existence for Catholics at the University of Sydney. What was new was the shift in emphasis from primary and secondary to tertiary education, a characteristic feature of Mannix’s thought from his earliest days at Maynooth.

The secular as well as the religious press took note of Mannix's accomplishments. The Melbourne daily *The Argus* spoke of the new Coadjutor with what for that period in Australian social history may be viewed as warm and wide approval:

It is not only within his own communion that the ripe scholarship and rich educational experience of a man like Dr Mannix, the new Roman Catholic Coadjutor — Archbishop of Melbourne, are understood and appreciated. His attainments, apart from all other considerations, must make him a welcome addition to the intellectual life of Victoria. He comes here with an established reputation, since he has been, not only head of a great college for the training of Roman Catholic clergy, but also a member of University governing bodies in Ireland. It will be to the public advantage if his ability and knowledge can be made available in all possible ways for the whole community, instead of being restricted to one section alone.

Such broad endorsements were short-lived and goodwill towards Mannix from non-Catholics largely evaporated in the furnace of World War One era domestic politics.

In the meantime, the very first Cathedral statement that Mannix made after arriving in Australia spelt out what was to prove an unwavering commitment to higher education in general and the academic achievement of the nation's Catholics in particular:

3

In a progressive age and especially in a new and progressive country like yours, probably the greatest danger of all would be, if Catholics were to stand aloof from the universities, to contribute nothing to the atmosphere which the coming men of Australia are breathing in the formative period of their lives, to exercise no influence in shaping the thought and ideals of the universities, to accept the status of an inferior caste in their own land.

In the natural course, the men who will make their mark for good or ill in Australian life will come from its Universities. Exceptions there will be, for whom no rule can provide. But, for the most part, the leaders of thought and action, the captains of industry, the heads of the learned professions, the men that will control the press, the scientists who will claim to extend the confines of knowledge and make war or peace with religion, the leaders of public life who will make or mar the well-being of the Commonwealth — all these will pass through the halls of the Universities. And hence, I am in full agreement with you when you convey the hope that every inducement should be held out to Catholics to take their proper place in the universities, with all due and sufficient safeguards for their faith and for the practice of their religion. They will, at the Universities, form those youthful friendships that often count for so much in the

struggle for success in after life. They will have a better opportunity of measuring themselves in early life with those who later on will be their rivals and competitors for the bigger prizes of life, and for that power and influence that will shape the economic, political and religious destiny of their country. The Universities should profit by the leavening of live, active Catholicism, the Church unobtrusively would obtain a hearing in the seats of learning, and Catholics might justly hope to secure without fear or favour their due and proportionate share of the good things that Australia has to offer in both public and private life.

Mannix lost no time in turning his attention to the University of Melbourne, which already had several affiliated Protestant residential colleges, the oldest of which, Trinity College, was founded in 1872. Mannix argued that “the establishment of a Catholic College within the University would help to place Catholics on a footing of equality with those of other denominations”.

In taking this approach to Catholic participation in the Australian higher education system, Mannix not only confronted the sectarianism prevalent at the time among the elite in Melbourne society but also expressed a confidence that he found in the thought of Newman:

4

Cardinal Newman assured the scientist that he need not fear that the Church or the theologian would always be at his elbow to raise a warning finger at every new step that for the moment may seem to diverge from received Catholic opinion. A passenger on board a sailing ship did not run to remonstrate with the captain every time the vessel, to suit the tides, the currents, the winds, tacked about from one side to the other. He did not expect that the prow would always point to the port of destination. An individual theologian might be nervous without cause, and remonstrate without authority. But Cardinal Newman rightly held that the Catholic Church was too old and too wise to fear the results of true science, or the investigation of true scientists.

Mannix remained realistic about what could be achieved with the resources available:

Of course, Cardinal Newman’s ideal was a Catholic University, in which, side by side with the other sciences, theology would take its place, and an honoured place. Unfortunately, we were not within sight of that ideal in Australia, and, therefore, I think I might venture to say, that if Cardinal Newman were today in Melbourne, he would urge Catholics to make the best of their opportunities, and to avail themselves of the University which was in their midst.

Mannix was not just a visionary or a skilled adaptor to institutional realities — he also took a leading role in the practical matter of raising the funds needed to build Newman College. The cost was met through donations, a process described by B.A. Santamaria:

The appeal was conducted personally by Mannix. He undertook a preaching campaign from the pulpits of Melbourne's churches throughout the year [1915]. He also went on a personal 'begging mission' (as he later called it) to almost every one of Melbourne's small group of wealthy Catholics. After many anxious moments, in which it seemed the appeal would fail, by the end of December it was over-subscribed.

Although the new college was envisaged along traditional Oxford lines, the Archdiocese made use of one of the more modern among the leading architects then working in Australia. Walter Burley Griffin was not local, neither a Catholic nor a member of any Christian denomination, indeed he adhered to esoteric beliefs in theosophy. The design that was commissioned, nevertheless, was consistent with the pattern of an Oxford residential college.

Newman College has, since the beginning of its operational history, been conducted by the Jesuit Order. The College these days has a wing named after Mannix and conducts annually the Daniel Mannix Public Lecture. The foundation stone of Newman College was laid by Archbishop Carr in 1916 and the first fifty-six students (all male) took up residence in 1918.

Kiernan notes that one of the very earliest residents at Newman College was a medical student named Cyril Bryan, who published the first biography of Daniel Mannix, entitled *Archbishop Mannix: Champion of Australian Democracy*. Bryan, who had served as an artillery officer in France during World War One, sought to correct the widely held view that Mannix was "disloyal" on account of his attitude to Irish independence and (successful) opposition during the war to plans to introduce conscription in Australia.

Any educational institution can be said to be a work in progress. Many additions have been made to the original buildings at Newman College in the decades since the first students were admitted. The College's Chapel of the Holy Spirit was consecrated in 1942. The multi-storey Allan and Maria Myers Academic Centre, which

Newman College shares with neighbouring college St. Mary's College, was opened in 2004. Newman College, which became co-residential in 1977, currently houses a total of nearly 300 undergraduate and postgraduate students.²

Following the establishment of Newman College, it would be several decades before Mannix again became involved in founding a residential college. In the intervening period, among his rich experiences, Mannix was to witness the selection of the Archbishop of Sydney, Norman Gilroy, as the first Australian-born Cardinal in 1946 at the age of 51.

According to the entry by T.P. Boland in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Gilroy's approach to higher education in Sydney was markedly different to that adopted by Mannix in Melbourne: "Always suspicious of secular universities, [Gilroy] dreamed of establishing a Catholic university. Two hundred acres (81 ha) were set aside at Beacon Hill for an Australian Notre Dame, but he had not faced the practical difficulties of the project."³

- 6 Mannix used the occasion of a speech welcoming the announcement of Archbishop Gilroy's elevation to express his admiration for Newman, a convert in middle age from Anglicanism who was made a Cardinal in 1879 at the age of seventy-eight:

I have just been reading a beautiful tribute to Cardinal Newman, and could not fail to be struck by the contrasts and the likenesses of the two Cardinals. The one was old and enfeebled by the weight of years and sufferings. The other is young and full of energy and vigour. The one was all his life a student, the other is a man of action which left little time for academic leisure. The one was eighty [*sic*] years before the cloud of suspicion and calumny lifted and he was created a Cardinal; the other has reached the same goal by pleasant ways and easy stages. The two paths lay far apart and there are violent contrasts. But there are also striking

² The University of Melbourne these days has not one but two Catholic residential colleges. St. Mary's Hall was established in 1918 by the Loreto Sisters as a university residence for Catholic women. St. Mary's Hall became St. Mary's College in 1966 and co-residential in 1977.

³ Two decades after his death in 1977, Cardinal Gilroy's dream of a Catholic University in Australia was realised. The University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA) was formally established by an Act of the Parliament of Western Australia in 1989. The first students at UNDA commenced in 1992 and UNDA now operates across three campuses in Fremantle, Sydney and Broome. Australian Catholic University (ACU) was opened on 1 January 1991 following the amalgamation of four Catholic tertiary institutions with campuses in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and ACT. In 2006, Campion College, the first private liberal arts tertiary college in Australia, opened its doors to students at its campus in the western part of Sydney.

likenesses. For in both the Cardinals we find the same consuming zeal for the salvation of souls and the extension of God's kingdom on earth; the same inborn gentleness which is supremely strong; the same natural unlaboured dignity which wins respect without loss of affection; the same gracious urbanity that fits men for any position to which they may be called.

A few years later, in 1951, Mannix restated his views on higher education for Catholics and the place of residential colleges:

I am convinced, as I always have been, that we can give the best service to the Catholic Church and to the whole community and to the universities in Australia by holding our place in the existing universities. Everything should be done to use the wide opportunities we have to endeavour to Christianise the environment and the universities.

Of course, there was a great deal else going on in the development of Catholic education in Australia. *Inter alia* Mannix is remembered for his leadership in the long campaign for state aid to private schools, which ran in parallel with the struggle against communism. According to Kiernan, the success of the campaign for state aid was the culmination not only of Mannix's goals for education but also his overall effort to enfranchise Australian Catholics.

7

By the end of his long life, Mannix's purpose had been achieved, so that a militant policy was no longer necessary. State aid for private schools came in 1964, when Menzies honoured his election promise. By the time Mannix died, Catholics were no longer treated as second-class citizens. They went to school and university the same as other Australians, and discrimination against them was a thing of the past.

(The lasting achievement of state aid, which continues to this day with bipartisan support, is all the more remarkable considering that when Mannix arrived in Australia not even the Australian Labor Party, the traditional party of the Catholic working class, was prepared to support such a policy when in government. In 1915, Prime Minister Joe Scullin, who was Catholic, said that to introduce state aid would be "to introduce divisive religious controversy into party political matters".)

Despite the success noted by Kiernan, the work of Daniel Mannix in Catholic education was not finished. The final project he undertook was the establishment of a Catholic residential college at what was to become the second university in Melbourne, the formation of which was first mooted towards the end of the 1950s.

In ensuring that there would be a Catholic residential college affiliated with Monash University, Mannix displayed undimmed enthusiasm and astonishing energy for a man who had lived to such a great age. He had seen profound changes in Australian society, with, among other things, the sectarianism manifested in the first half of the twentieth century had been followed by a rise in secularism in the second half.

In a sign of the times, there was no allocation of land to the different denominations as part of the planning for Monash University as there had been in the middle of the previous century when the University of Melbourne was established. The University of Melbourne itself was from the outset a determinedly secular institution which banned the teaching of divinity within its classrooms; the land set aside for Christian colleges was on the northern perimeter, pointedly adjacent to rather than on the university campus. But the allocation had been made.

8 In the case of Monash University, the Archdiocese was obliged to provide the land (and 25% of the cost of construction) before Government-sourced financial assistance to build an affiliated residential college could be secured. That land is situated in close proximity to the original University campus. While the colleges at the University of Melbourne exist in what is now viewed as the same precinct as the campus at Parkville, the site on which Mannix College was constructed is across a busy major road near the main entrance to Monash.

Also, there was some resistance to the notion of traditional denominational residential colleges among founding members of Monash University, an institution inclined towards establishing its own non-denominational halls of residence in keeping with the kind of egalitarian thinking in higher education prevalent in the mid twentieth century. To this day, there are at Monash University five such halls of residence located within the perimeter of the Clayton campus.⁴

4 Marist College, intended as a seminary and residential college under the direction of the Marist Brothers, was officially opened as the second residential college formally affiliated with Monash University in 1969. The property subsequently was purchased by Monash University and became the University's sixth hall of residence, now known as Normanby House and housing approximately 100 student residents.

In 2010, Monash University commenced construction at the Clayton campus of two new residential halls, each of which, according to the University website, is designed to house 300 students. At the time of writing, there are also several privately operated student housing projects under construction in the vicinity of Monash Clayton campus.

For Mannix contemplating the establishment of Monash University in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was a sense of urgency that came from some rumblings of dissent within the Church, as Santamaria describes:

Mannix was concerned about the future prospect because there was an opinion in Catholic circles, apart from the university, against the building of any further Catholic residential colleges as being of low priority compared with other needs in the Catholic educational programme. Yet he was as much committed to the proposition of a Catholic college at Monash as he had been to the building of Newman College when he came to Australia fifty years before.

Mannix had the support of influential figures at the new university who continued their efforts after his death and ensured that his vision was realised. Instrumental in that endeavour was Sir Michael Chamberlin, who was very much the kind of prominent, influential Catholic layman Mannix had originally envisaged as benefitting from the enfranchisement of Australian Catholics.

The self-made businessman son of a railway employee and one of seven children, Chamberlin himself did not attend university, though he did serve on the Council of Newman College from 1945 to 1972 and was also a member of the Archbishop Mannix Travelling Scholarship Committee at Newman College.

9

As noted in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Chamberlin was appointed to the interim council and council of Monash University and served as Deputy Chancellor from 1961 until 1968. He took particular interest in the university's proposed religious centre and in Mannix College, of which he was made first fellow and after whom the College library was named in 1972.

The official history of Mannix College by Emeritus Professor Gabrielle McMullen notes that the planning for and conduct of Mannix College on behalf of the Archdiocese of Melbourne was undertaken from 1964 by the Dominican Order at the invitation of Mannix's successor Archbishop Justin Simonds after an invitation to the Jesuits had been declined. The foundation stone was blessed and laid in May 1968 by Archbishop James Knox, the successor to Archbishop Simonds.

Professor McMullen notes that at the social function that followed the ceremony, the Chancellor of Monash University, Sir Robert Blackwood, hailed “another milestone in the progress of the University. It is a distinctive one in that it is the first residential affiliated college.” In a speech in response, Sir Michael Chamberlin declared: “This college was the great ambition of the remarkable mind of Archbishop Mannix. He said to me, ‘If you don’t get on with this college we will never have it.’”

It was Chamberlin who presented the original plans for Mannix College to the University for inspection in June 1963: “While these particular plans [...] proved too ambitious and were not realised, in December of that year college affiliation was secured and this opened the way for an application to the Australian Universities Commission for funding”, notes McMullen.

Thus, with the establishment of the residential college that bears his name, Mannix had carried forward Newman’s idea of a university rooted in collegiality into the second as well as the first of the two universities established in the state of Victoria.

10

In gaining the support of Monash University to establish a residential college, Daniel Mannix can be viewed as having succeeded where the Anglican Archdiocese, which also had plans to establish a residential college at Monash, did not, and where no other denomination has to date succeeded in realising Newman’s collegiate ideal. Mannix College realises a unique mission and provides a beacon of Catholic collegiate civilisation in the south-eastern expanse of Melbourne’s vast urban sprawl.

More than forty years after opening its doors to students, Mannix College, which became co-residential in 1974 and currently houses 250 students, remains the only traditional residential college affiliated with Monash University, which itself has grown to become the largest secular university in Australia with multiple campuses now spread throughout Victoria and across four overseas locations.

With the establishment of Newman College taking place more than half a century after the foundation of the University of Melbourne, Archbishop Mannix could have been seen as catching up with the other denominations. In the case of Mannix College at Monash University, history shows him to be in the vanguard.

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A missionary endeavour of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Mannix College is a residential college affiliated with Monash University.

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