

# **Canon William Hayward and St Joseph's Mission to Deaf People, Manchester**

William Hayward was born into an Anglican family in 1896. He wanted to become a priest in the Anglican Church. He began his studies at a Church of England Theological College but the Great War of 1914-18 broke out, so he joined the army and was on active service in the trenches, taking part in the battle for Hill 60. When he was off duty, he used to visit Catholic Churches in the area, often attending Benediction.

In 1915, he contracted meningitis which left him profoundly deaf. Discharged from the army, he went back to the Theological College to resume his studies for the Anglican ministry at the House of the Resurrection at Mirfield, near Leeds. During his time at Mirfield, he began to think about becoming a Catholic. Eventually he was instructed in the Faith and received into the Catholic Church. Sadly, his conversion caused a temporary split in his family, so for a while, he was on his own and without support.

During this time Mr. Hayward met a good man called Dr. Scholtz who was a Jew. It was Dr. Scholtz who suggested to Mr. Hayward that he try to get a teaching job at a school called St. John's Catholic School for deaf children at Boston Spa. When Mr. Hayward applied, he was accepted and he began teaching the top class of boys in January 1919. Seb Caprioni, a deaf shoemaker who worked at Boston Spa, taught William Sign Language and he became a very skilled signer. William had many duties, he taught them Catechism and he collected the boys from a London hostel run by the Sisters of Charity and taking them back to Boston Spa. Soon he realised the boys did not have enough religious education and he was becoming more and more concerned about this situation. He spoke to Sr. Augustine Moser, a Daughter of Charity Sister at Boston Spa about this problem, but Sr. Augustine said to him, "The boys need a deaf priest, so why not you?" Sr. Augustine encouraged William to think about becoming a priest. Then William wrote to Bishop Cowgill in Leeds. He waited and waited, he heard nothing. Twelve months later, he wrote again. The Bishop was about to make his *ad limina* visit to Rome, so he told Mr. Hayward that he would try his best. He managed to get the permission needed to allow William Hayward to study for the priesthood if there was a seminary that would accept his total deafness.

William applied to various seminaries, they all rejected him because of his deafness. William Hayward felt that all was lost, but one day a priest friend who visited Oscott College regularly told William that he would try to put in a good word for him. He explained to the rector of the college the hopes of the deaf teacher and that he could lipread well. The rector was Monsignor Parkinson, an expert in Latin, and he decided to give him a chance, so arrangements were made for William to come and see him one Saturday evening. When Mr. Hayward arrived at the door, the weather was atrocious, the rain coming down in torrents and he was very wet.

Monsignor Parkinson greeted William Hayward believing that he could lipread. Unfortunately, he spoke not in English but in Latin, and poor William was not able to lipread or understand what the Monsignor was saying. The Monsignor immediately wanted to send him back to Boston Spa, but the terrible weather saved William. The Monsignor decided to allow William to stay and wait until Monday before returning to Boston Spa.

When Monday came round, Monsignor Parkinson was having second thoughts. He had given William some papers in Latin for him to work on, and he was impressed with the response William had made, so he straight away decided to accept this young man as a student for the priesthood. A few weeks later, a strong rapport was building up between rector and student. In fact, they got on so well together that the Monsignor suggested writing a Catechism together, but it was not to be. He

died and it was many years later in 1948 when Fr. William Hayward eventually wrote a book called *'Faith and Love through Christ'* for Deaf people.

During his days at Oscott, William made friends with two students from the Salford Diocese, Francis Buckley and Anthony Weston. Anthony himself was a late vocation coming from a teaching post in Ancoats. Both were very kind and supportive to William.

William Hayward was ordained for the Leeds Diocese by Bishop Cowgill on 17th December 1927, his two friends having been ordained a few years earlier. Fr. William Hayward went to stay at the old seminary attached to the Bishop's residence, and there he awaited for his appointment but none came. Time passed by and he became more disconsolate. There was only one thing he could do, he decided he would go and see his priest friend, Fr. Francis Buckley who was now working at St. Anne's in Ancoats, Manchester. While he was in Ancoats, Fr. William Hayward found help from another priest, Monsignor Canon Lionel J. O'Kelly, VG. Eventually, Fr. Hayward moved to Salford Diocese and he was appointed resident Chaplain at St. Mary's Home and Hospital, Newton Heath. This was the beginning of his work serving Deaf people.

### **The Foundation of the Mission**

On the afternoon of Good Friday, 29th March 1929, Fr. Buckley took Fr. Hayward to the home of the president of St. Anne's, Ancoats, SVP Conference. At the informal meeting, the SVP agreed to the founding of the Mission, and the Sisters of Charity made available a part of their building at St. Joseph's Convent, St. Vincent's Street, in Ancoats. This would be the Mission's base. There was a large hall which could be used on special occasions.

They wrote up the aims and objectives of the Mission which were as follows:

*"The Mission was formed to provide for the special needs of the deaf and dumb, and especially to give greater facilities for religious instruction and the reception of the Sacraments. There is a Social Club where lectures are given and games provided. Another branch of the work is to safeguard the Catholic education for the deaf and dumb children, who are often sent to non-Catholic institutions. Names and addresses of cases of deaf and dumb Catholics not on the books of the Mission will be appreciated."*

The parish SVP conference took an active part in the running of the social club, and Thursday nights were very popular because it was 'pictures night.' Father Hayward was very proficient as a photographer and before the silent-movie film (Charlie Chaplin, Charlie Chase, Harold Lloyd etc), he would show a film of himself giving a sermon in sign language. There were also outings to Boston Spa.

The Mission prospered, and plans were made to move from Ancoats to Old Trafford. Premises were made available at 368 Chester Road, Old Trafford. The first Mass was celebrated in the chapel on the Feast of SS Peter & Paul, 29th June 1936. Bishop Henshaw made an informal visit bringing with him James Rossall, President of Manchester Central Council of the SVP. A conference of SVP was formed at the Mission which was now called 'St. Joseph's Mission to the Catholic Deaf and Dumb.'

The work of Fr. Hayward was becoming well known and from time to time he would travel to other parts of the country to advise and assist with other clubs for the deaf. There was a club in Newcastle which received the full support of the SVP. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) also established Deaf Clubs in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and London. These Clubs were organised and paid for by the SVP.

### **The Mission expanded**

Canon Hayward was often away on mission, nearly always every two weeks. The Sunday before he was going away, he would always tell his congregation at St. Joseph's, Old Trafford, where he would be going, and encouraged them to be on time for the following Sunday's Mass as another priest would come and celebrate Mass. Whenever he went to London, he stayed with his relatives who lived there. The Canon had a strong commitment, not only to Deaf people in Manchester, but also in many other areas such as London, Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham. He usually returned on Monday or Tuesday, and he would often bring back news about what was happening there.

After many years, when Canon Hayward got to know different people in other dioceses, he asked people to work with Deaf people. Fr Joseph Nightingale worked with Deaf people in Birmingham; Sr Catherine Hegarty worked for 15-20 years in London. There were Vincentian priests working in Scotland and London, Fr Dermot Sweeney and Fr McAtarsney.

It was not only the Bishop's concern, Canon Hayward was also anxious to find another priest to eventually take over his work. By 1960, the Canon's health was deteriorating. In that year, a young priest, Charles Hollywood, came to join the Mission on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16 July 1960. Canon Hayward died on 9th January 1963.