

'MARY AND JOHN REACH OUT TO US FROM OUR PAST' – HOMILY - 12 NOVEMBER 2017

**1840S AND 1850S: THE STORY OF JOHN AND MARY  
AS WE APPROACH THE 175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF CATHOLIC WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS  
IN BRISBANE IN 1843, HOW DO WE ENGAGE WITH THE PAST?**

Last week, names were provided in the homily of early Catholics from June 1845.  
Included were **John and Mary Cassim**.

**JOHN AND MARY'S STORY: THE BEGINNINGS**

John was born around 1814 in Calcutta and had suffered from smallpox.  
As a servant, he arrived in Mauritius with his employer in late 1831.  
Convicted in 1839 of theft he was sentenced to transportation for seven years.  
Aged 25, with brown hair and eyes, five foot in height and not able to read or write.  
When he was transported as a convict to Australia, he was a widower.  
In 1840 there is a **request from Moreton Bay** to Sydney for **flour**  
(as a hailstorm had destroyed the wheat crop) and for **shepherds**.  
In South East Queensland we know the damage of hailstorms to crops.  
John was one of the 15 convicts sent as shepherds to Moreton Bay.

John was a **convert from Islam**, and **baptised Catholic** around 1844-1845.  
He and **Mary Taylor**, originally from County Cavan in Ireland,  
**married** possibly late 1843 or 1844.  
She is listed as Mary Cassim in 1844.  
**Mary Taylor requested his freedom**,  
and he was granted ticket-of leave on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1843.  
It had to be renewed each year until the sentence was completed.

**TODAY, WHAT WE WOULD SAY TO MARY CASSIM,  
WHOSE FAITH INFLUENCED HER HUSBAND'S CONVERSION?**

**WHAT WOULD WE SAY TO JOHN CASSIM, AN EARLY CATECHUMEN?  
WHAT STORIES OF HIS FAITH JOURNEY WOULD HE SHARE WITH US?**

**WHAT WOULD MARY AND JOHN TELL US ABOUT THEIR RESPECT FOR THE LOCAL  
ABORIGINES?**

**AND WHAT ABOUT THE PRESSURES, DISCRIMINATION, CHALLENGES, JOYS, LOVE AND  
FAITH OF COLONIAL LIFE AT THAT TIME?**

**THE STORY CONTINUES: LIFE AND WORK**

They moved to Kangaroo Point to establish a small Boarding House in 1851,  
upgraded to a larger place in 1855 at Kangaroo Point  
and leased a boarding house at Cleveland that year.  
They were known for their hospitality and service,  
and the opportunities they gave Aboriginal people in work.  
One of the local Aborigines was called himself Billy Cassim.

**Mary died in 1861 after suffering asthma from late the year before.**

**John married Annie Rafter in 1868.**

She had migrated from Ireland in 1866.

Their Cleveland Hotel became one of the venues for celebrating Mass until a church was built in Cleveland.

John was one of 3 Church trustees for buying land in Cleveland in 1872.

**He died in 1884.**

John and Mary knew of the mercy of God in their lives and discovered together a life lived in faith.

Matthew's Gospel 23:23 implores us not to neglect the weightier matters of *"justice and mercy and faith"*.

**MATTHEW 7:21-23**

In the Sermon on the Mount in Chapter 7 we are reminded that we know that we cannot bluff our way into the fullness of eternal life.

*'Not everyone who says to me,  
"Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven,  
but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.  
On that day many will say to me,  
"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,  
and cast out demons in your name,  
and do many deeds of power in your name?"  
Then I will declare to them,  
"I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers."'*

**TODAY'S GOSPEL - MATTHEW 25 1-13**

In today's Gospel we follow on from this challenge in Chapter 7.

*'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this.  
Ten bridesmaids\* took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.  
Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.  
When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them;  
but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.  
As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept.  
But at midnight there was a shout,  
"Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him."  
Then all those bridesmaids\* got up and trimmed their lamps.  
The foolish said to the wise,  
"Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out."  
But the wise replied,  
"No! there will not be enough for you and for us;  
you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves."  
And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came,  
and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet;  
and the door was shut.*

*Later the other bridesmaids\* came also,  
saying, "Lord, lord, open to us."  
But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you."  
Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'*

We all are invited to the wedding banquet of God's eternal love.  
However we don't all take this invitation seriously.  
Jesus reminds us that we can miss out.

Through the mercy of God we are continually given opportunities to love God.

**John and Mary Cassim together accepted God's mercy  
and were known for their love of God and love of neighbour.**

Like the wise bridesmaids they became committed  
in their waiting upon the bridegroom, Jesus.

(If you are interested in knowing more about the Cassim family,  
Fr Patrick Tynan wrote –

*"Johnny Cassim Coolie-Convict-Catechumen-Colonial Entrepreneur 1814-1884".  
Published in 1997 by Church Archivists' Press.*

Some of the details in this homily are taken from his book.)

The Gospel passages in chapters 7 and 25 use the word "*know*"  
not in the English sense, but in the fuller Biblical sense.  
God in love - knowing us intimately and our knowing God in love.  
Our hearts alight in love of God.  
Waiting on God by the way we live our lives,  
in our love of God and neighbour, in our prayer.  
The symbol of oil for our love and living in God.

**Thank you to John, Mary and Annie Cassim.**

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Mary and John reach out to us from our past – 12 November 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111217.cfm>]

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