

FACT FILE

Fr Gerald Ward

Date of birth: 1806

Place of birth: London, England

Died: 14 January 1858



Gerald Ward was born in London 1806 and arrived in Australia on 7 September 1850 after being recruited to work in the Melbourne mission by the pioneer priest Fr Patrick Geoghegan.

Fr Ward knew of the workings of the St Vincent de Paul Society and initiated its establishment in Australia at St Francis' Church in Melbourne on 5 March 1854 after witnessing the plight of people following the discovery of gold in Victoria.

Fr Ward became the first president of the St Francis' Conference in Melbourne and began to address the problems he saw such as the increased number of homeless and deserted children roaming the streets.

In a submission to the government of the day, Fr Ward stated that the new conference aimed at “the relief of the destitute, in a manner as much as possible permanently beneficial and the visitation of poor families.”

One of his accomplishments was establishing the St Vincent de Paul orphanage in South Melbourne. The foundation stone for the orphanage was laid in 1855 and the first children were accepted in 1857.

Gerald Ward died on 14 January 1858 aged 52. A newspaper noted that “he was one in whom many a widow and orphan had found a good friend.” His enduring legacy is founded in such friendship.