

# DID YOU KNOW

- **WHEN THE FIRST STAGE OF THE CRYPT WAS BUILT?**
- **WHEN THE RELICS WERE PLACED IN THE CRYPT?**
- **WHOSE RELICS WERE IN THE RELIQUARIES OPPOSITE THE ALTAR OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS?**  
(Have been removed by thieves).
- **WHAT OTHER RELICS WERE IN THE CRYPT?**
- **WHICH RELIC WAS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE GREATEST TREASURES OF THE CATHEDRAL?**

These excerpts, taken from **Cathedral Chronicles and Newspapers in 1918**, give us some insight into how the Crypt looked at the end of Stage 1 of the Building.

## The First Stage of the Crypt

*On the right-hand side of the temporary High Altar — in the S.E. corner of the Dome, is a spiral stone staircase descending to the crypt. This will eventually contain three chapels and altars, but at present consists only of less than half of the central chapel. The unfinished end and broken vault is bricked up with a temporary wall and furnished with a temporary altar.*

*This chapel is a special Votive War Offering in reparation to Our Lady of Sorrows, and a memorial of our Catholic soldiers of West Australia who have fallen in the Great War. Over the altar is a little statue of the "Mater Dolorosissima", — the Mother Most Sorrowful. The seven swords symbolise her "seven sorrows": "What heart is so filled with sorrow and compassion for the griefs of mankind in this terrible war-time as the Sacred Heart of Mary. She who supported in her arms the dead, blood - stained body of her own dear Son, the Incarnate God, mourns with the bereaved mothers over their heroic soldier sons. The war-devastated areas of France and Belgium were full of ancient and beautiful sanctuaries of the Mother of God which now lie roofless in desolate ruin.*

**These excerpts describe the relics.**

## THE RELICS

*In the arched recesses of the apse opposite the altar (of Our Lady of Sorrows) are three urns containing holy relics— portions of the bones of four early Christian martyrs— all four soldiers—*

**SS. John and Paul**, officers in the guard of the Roman Empress Domitilla,

**Saint Sebastian** and

**St. George**, Patron Saint of England.

***In a screened-off recess on the North side of the crypt*** is a special shrine containing a very holy relic — a fragment of one of the boards of the actual Manger in which Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ was laid at His Birth. This relic was brought from Rome, from the great Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, where the sacred boards of the Manger are preserved in a costly reliquary of gold and silver, in the crypt below the Higher Altar, and are carried round the Church in procession every Christmas Day.

***In the Reliquary beneath Our Blessed Lady's Altar*** are preserved other relics, namely,

**Portions of the bones of**

Pope St Gregory the Great;

St. Thomas a'Becket of Canterbury, Martyr;

St. Serenus, a boy martyr, but 12 years old;

St. Paul Miki, Martyr of Japan;

SS. Dorothy, Martina and Perpetua, Virgin Martyrs;

St. John the Baptist de Rossi, and

St. Alphonsus Liguori.

**Fragments of**

*the wooden altar on which St. Paul was beheaded;  
the Holy House of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Loretto;  
the coffin of St. Francis Xavier,*

**Relics of the clothes of**

*St. Ambrose;  
St. Nicholas;  
The Cure d' Ars;  
St. Philip Neri;  
St. Augustine,  
St. Lucy;  
St. Ignatius;  
St. Peter Claver; and  
St. Tarcissus, the boy martyr of the Blessed Sacrament.*

**NOTE:** These relics are no longer under the Altar of Our Lady of Sorrows. Their location is unknown.

### **THE CRYPT IN 1938**

*On the right hand side of the communion rails is a spiral staircase descending to the crypt. The central chapel is that of Our Lady of Sorrows a memorial to the Australian soldiers who fell in the Great War. Its altar is exactly under the High Altar, and in the reliquary below, treasures are preserved. (see list above). In the arched recesses of the apse opposite the altar are three urns containing other relics (martyred soldiers). Inside the screened-off recess on the northern side of the crypt is a special shrine containing a very holy relic (boards of the manger.) On the other a large grotto containing the Christmas Crib (chapel of St Michael) and beyond Our Lady's Chapel is the Chapel and Altar of St. Joseph*

[Murchison Times and Cue-Big Bell-Reedy Advocate (WA : 1937 - 1942), Saturday 10 September 1938]

*After Mass the statue was carried in procession to the crypt, where it was laid in the crib. Here the relic of the manger, one of the greatest treasures of the Cathedral, was exposed for adoration and incensed by the celebrant.*

[Cathedral Chronicle (Geraldton, WA : 1931 - 1954), Wednesday 1 January 1941, page 1]

**Note:** In earlier times, the Nativity Scene statues were removed from the grotto in the Cathedral after Christmas and placed in the crypt. The Cathedral grotto was then dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.