

Frank Stanislaus Flynn (1906—2000)

This page lists the biography and guide to the manuscripts of Frank Flynn.

Biography

Catholic priest, ophthalmologist and author, Frank Flynn was born on 6 December 1906 in Sydney, one of nine children born to Dr John Flynn and Maud May, nee Witton.

John Flynn had arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1888, where he had been House Surgeon in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Dublin.

Frank Flynn commenced his education at the Brigidine Convent in Randwick, Sydney. Along with his five brothers he was then educated by Marist Brothers at Darlinghurst, Sydney. They all excelled at studies, and all went into medicine. In 1925 Frank Flynn started his medical studies at Sydney University.

In 1933 he sailed to England on Jervis Bay as ship's surgeon. He studied and worked at the Royal Ophthalmic Hospital (Moorfields) in London, the world's oldest and most famous eye hospital.

Not yet 30, he made several important contributions to the study of eye disease, including the introduction of a new drug which he named Mydricine, and the design and patenting of a machine used in operating on detached retinas.

While still at Moorfields, Flynn wrote to his family informing them of his decision to become a priest. He returned to Australia in 1934, travelling as ship's surgeon on board the liner Automadon.

He joined the Missionaries of the Sacred heart (MSC) in December 1935.

It was while studying Philosophy at Kensington Monastery in New South Wales that Flynn first met Monsignor Francis Xavier Gsell who, was appointed as the first resident Catholic Bishop of Darwin in 1938, was to have a profound influence on the way Flynn approached his later ministry amongst the Aboriginal people of the north. Flynn was ordained as a priest in March 1942.

In response to the many people who questioned why he gave up medicine for the Church, Flynn later wrote, 'I never did for any lengthy period divorce ophthalmic practice from my priesthood.

I have been fortunate, indeed, in that wherever I have gone I have found a union of two interests, one aimed at healing the body and the other aimed at healing the spirit'.

After ordination Flynn was sent to the Northern Territory where he was attached to the Army as a Major, serving in the dual role of Chaplain and Ophthalmologist. Military