



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

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A newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families and friends, and supporters of our Congregation

Full steam ahead for the Downs and West Drought Appeal

This year has already been a very busy one for Christine Henry, rsc and the Downs and West Drought Appeal (DWDA).

March saw the Western Queensland communities of Roma, Charleville, and Quilpie devastated by record-breaking floods. DWDA went straight to the scene, and provided assistance to those in desperate need.

Recently, climatic changes experienced by outback communities have not always stemmed from drought. Flooding, wind, dust storms and locust migrations are proving to be just as harmful. Adding to this, increasing health problems, unemployment, workloads, family break-ups and isolation are continuing issues in country life. With this in mind, DWDA has proposed to the Congregational Leader and Council that the name be changed to reflect the support it provides to those in need in this area of Queensland.

The year is half over, and already DWDA has worked in collaboration with *Centacare* to organise thirteen 'Country Girls' Days Out', with 780 women from rural and remote areas attending.

Working together with a small group of health professionals in the Toowoomba area, Christine worked tirelessly to create a new Women's Programme called Dragonfly Health and Wellness Retreat. The first was held on June 18th.

Women living and working on the land affected by climatic conditions have been referred to Dragonfly and will join other women for a weekend to seek medical advice and to have some relaxation and welcome company.

Later in the year, more 'Country Girl's Day Out' events, a charity fair, craft sales and more Country to City Children's Camps will be planned. DWDA will also be present at the Agricultural Show for a second year.



Getting ready for a big day at "Water World"

"Seeing how much the students enjoyed the trip made it incredibly worthwhile – we knew our work and time were very much appreciated."

The first Country to City Children's Camp took place last December with 48 children aged six to twelve travelling to Toowoomba, Brisbane and the Sunshine and Gold Coast for five days. The children went to the Australia Zoo, White Water World, enjoying many sights of Brisbane, as well as feasting on delicious donations from sponsors. Students from Mt St Michael's Ashgrove gave up their holiday time to assist Sister Christine with the trips. The students said helping out on the trips had definitely changed the way they see the drought and its effects on Western communities. The students were eager to help as they wanted to see the results of their fundraising efforts over the years. They thoroughly enjoyed helping the DWDA in achieving its mission.

The students from Mt. St. Michael's are eager to help out on future trips, and they all agreed that their assistance had made them realise not to take things

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Jubilee Celebrations

Platinum Jubilees

70 years on 26th August

Sister Catherine O’Carrigan

Sister Marita Sweeney

Golden Jubilees

50 years on 17th August

Sister Kerry Anne Barrass

Sister Jean Johnston

Sister Frances Graham

Sister Aileen Thomas

Sister Anne Turner



Having fun sure works up an appetite!

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for granted. With the continued support of organisations like Mt. St. Michael’s, the DWDA is sure to achieve even greater things in the future.

In the meantime, we must keep Western Queensland communities in our prayers and thoughts as they continue to battle whatever Mother Nature throws their way. May their voices always be heard, and may the Downs & West Drought Appeal be ever ready to support them.

“To see the children’s faces was the best because it was their first experience of something like this. It feels good to know that you have helped them out.”

Eulogy

Faye Turner rsc



11th January, 2010
Rest in Peace

This eulogy was written by Jenny Martin, niece of Sister Faye. Jenny lives in Utah USA, and Jenny’s brother, Ian Martin read this eulogy at Faye’s Requiem Mass.

“Part of saying goodbye at a time like this, is to come to terms with what my aunt taught about life and about herself. These are just three of the important lessons I learned from my aunt Faye:

Acceptance:

Faye was born at the end of the depression era and grew up during the Second World War. As a young woman, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She endured hardships my generation cannot imagine. Rather than raging against these situations that could not be changed, she accepted what was, and changed herself.

Strength:

Faye was the proverbial tower of strength; and a very compelling role model. One of my most vivid memories signifying her strength of character is from late 1979, when Faye took care of my siblings and me for several weeks after both parents were hospitalized in a car accident. There were 7 or 8 of us at home then, ranging from young children to young adults. Looking back now, this must have been an enormous undertaking; one that would fill me with trepidation. But Faye took on this rather thankless task with characteristic composure, and saw us safely through till our parents return.

Wisdom:

My mum says that even from the very earliest days, Faye was wise beyond her years. She was also the first family member to have a tertiary education and to travel overseas. She shared with me the joy of her

travels, and on the occasions that we would meet over recent years, she shared her wisdom and her philosophy of life.

To me, Auntie Faye was a commanding presence, and a very caring, thoughtful and giving person. I treasure the hand-made lace handkerchief she presented me with as the “something-old” for my wedding in 2005. I am deeply saddened that I cannot farewell her in person.”

The following text was contributed by Sister Marina Ward rsc:

Faye died on 11th January 2010, two weeks before her Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession. She had spent her last years at Cardinal Gilroy Retirement Village and was a pleasure to visit. Faye was very content and accepted her physical limitations graciously, always speaking positively about the care she received at Merrylands and the support and love from the Congregation, her family and friends. It was with joy and sadness that we farewelled Faye with Mass of Christian Burial/Rite of Commitment. Faye, may you rest in peace and happiness.

The Annals of the Sisters of Charity in Australia written by M. John Baptist De Lacy

In this edition of Keep in Touch we present the first instalment of “*The Annals of the Sisters of Charity*” written by one of the first Sisters, Mary Baptiste de Lacy, after the Sisters arrived in Sydney in 1838. We know the Annals will be of great interest to all K.I.T. readers, with the series continuing in future editions.

*A.M.D.G.*¹

On the 8th of August 1838, Margaret Cahil², Julia Cater, Catharine³ O’Brien, Alicia De Lacy⁴ and Elizabeth Williams departed from the House of the Novitiate of Sisters of Charity Stanhope St Dublin to found in New South Wales a congregation similar to that from which they filiated⁵; they arrived on the 31st December at Woolloomooloo[sic], the residence of the Rt Revd J B Polding⁶.

On the 7th January 1839 the four first named Sisters made the customary semestrial renovation of vows⁷ in presence of the Bishop, after which he judged it expedient to admit to the degree of Formed Sisters, Margaret Cahil [sic], Julia Cater and Catharine [sic] O’Brien, dispensing the two latter from the completion of eight years after the Religious Profession as required by the Constitutions.

On the same day his Lordship named Margaret Cahil [sic] Superior of the Congregation and for her Assistants, Sisters J. Cater & Catherine O’Brien, the latter to the office of Admonitress⁸. The community took possession of the House in Paramatta [sic] the 18th January 1839 and on the 2nd February commenced the observance of religious discipline according to the constitutions. On the 10th the Blessed Sacrament was deposited in their Oratory⁹ by the Very Revd Dr. Ullathorne V.G.¹⁰

This is a good place to interrupt DeLacy’s narrative in order to comment on Bishop Polding and Dr Ullathorne. When the first Catholics arrived in Australia, voluntarily or involuntarily, they were

under the ecclesial jurisdiction of the English missionary in Mauritius. Australia was under British authority and so Roman authorities put Catholics under the control of an English cleric. The first priests in Australia were what we would term almost free lances: Mauritius was so far away as to have negligible impact.

The first person to arrive in Australia with ecclesial jurisdiction over the other priests there, was Dr William Bernard Ullathorne (1806-1809), a young English Benedictine, but he was still subject to Mauritius. Replies to his questions and requests were so tardy that Ullathorne urged Rome to appoint a bishop to Australia.

The choice was his former novice master, another English Benedictine, John Bede Polding (1794-1877) who arrived in Australia in 1834. In 1838 Ullathorne returned to Europe to present a report to Rome on conditions in Australia and to seek personnel and material contributions from Europe for the Australian mission. He travelled back with a group of priests and the Sisters of Charity, over whom he kept a careful watch. When the Sisters arrived at Parramatta, Polding appointed Ullathorne as their spiritual director.

The Annals Continue:

The deeds of charity exercised by the community in Paramatta, are, the instruction of the Female Prisoners at the Factory¹¹, and the Children of the Poor School, also visiting the Hospital, and the sick poor in their dwellings.

The Factory is the Prison where all the Female Prisoners are sent, who are not assigned out to service on their arrival in the Colony. They are divided into three classes, the first class consists of persons waiting for assignment; the second are Nurses [that is, mothers of new children] who remain in the building until their children are four years old; the third class are persons sent for punishment, who remain according to the sentence of the court in which they have been tried.

On the 20th January 1839, we visited the

Factory, the account given of the inmates was deployable in number 800, about 500 of whom were Catholics. As a last experiment for their amendment & to awaken a sense of remorse, the attending Priest had given up saying the usual weekly Mass, none were ever permitted to approach Holy Communion except the dying.

They received our Instructions with respect & attention, and before three months had elapsed we had the consolation of hearing from her Excellency the Lady Gipps, and from the Superintendents [sic], that cursing, blasphemy and the hitherto daily use of improper language was much diminished.

During the above named period 200 of those poor penitents had received Holy Communion and 180 the Sacrament of Confirmation, they have now Mass once a week and as long as they remain in the building¹² the advantage of approaching the Sacrament each month. Fruitless, undoubtedly would have been our poor efforts, if not for the unwearied zeal of their enlightened Pastor The Very Revd Doctor Ullathorne who attends daily to hear their confessions.

During the space of 6 months 50 of the Protestants have been received into the Church, and have approached Holy Communion before leaving the Factory.

On the 9th of April 1839 Elizabeth Williams, in Religion Sister Mary Xavier, was admitted to Holy Profession¹³, by our venerated Bishop John Bede Polding, Founder and Ecclesiastical Superior of the congregation of the Religious Sisters of Charity in New South Wales. This was the first Sister of Charity and the first religious of any order professed in this position of the globe¹⁴. The ceremony took place in the Church of Parramatta, a great number of persons were present, Protestants, Methodists, etc. A sermon was preached by the Very Rev Doctor Ullathorne, in which he dwelt particularly on the spirit of Religious Life, gave examples from Church History of its early institution, the effects produced in the Soul by a faithful correspondence with the grace of vocation, and concluded with glowing description of

the happiness awaiting her in another life, who has been the faithful spouse of Christ in this.

Footnotes:

1. These letters represent ‘Ad maiorem Dei Gloriam’, that is, ‘For the greater glory of God’. As the Sisters of Charity had constitution derived from those of the Society of Jesus, they also adopted some of their customs, including that of directing everything they did for God’s glory.
2. The name should be ‘Cahill’. Since all the Sisters had received religious names in the Irish Congregation, it is interesting that De Lacy keeps to their secular names in the early pages of her account.
3. Usually spelled ‘Catherine’.
4. Though many put ‘de’ instead of ‘De’, this Sister always capitalised her name, Documents show that the ‘De’ was restored to the Lacy name only in Alicia’s father/grandfather’s time (from 1816).
5. This description indicates the Sisters’ misunderstanding of their position. If they were to found a new institute, they would not be a filiation, or daughter house, of the institute in Ireland.
6. At that time, the area of Woolloomooloo included what we would call Darlinghurst. Bishop Polding’s house would have stood near the lower end of the present William Street, on the water side.
7. Even though the Sisters of Charity took vows for life, they made two three day retreats each year prior to a public renewal of vows as a devotional practice.
8. The Admonitress was the one allowed to tell the superior of her faults. It would have been considered unsuitable for any other religious to have done so.
9. The Oratory was a place for prayer.
10. V.G. stands for vicar general, the second in charge in the diocese under the bishop.
11. The Female Factory was the Female Gaol. De Lacy says more about it later.
12. Because of overcrowding, prisoners were allowed to find occupation in the town by day and some found it also at night. That is why readiness to approach the sacraments would not be presumed of those who did not stay in the Factory.
13. Eliza Williams (1800-1892) was the longest lived of the five who went to Australia, dying in Tasmania, three sisters went in 1847. The others were M. John Cahill and S.M. De Sales O’Brien.
14. This is rather a sweeping claim and it is likely that De Lacy referred to women religious, not the Benedictines who had come some years earlier.

Australia Day Honour for Anthea Groves, rsc OAM

Sister Anthea Groves, rsc was recognised in the 2010 Australia Day honours for “her outstanding contribution to the community through her service to nursing for over forty years, and to St Vincent’s Hospital, Darlinghurst”.

Our Congregational Vicar, Lauren Dixon rsc, with Margaret Fitzgerald rsc and family members including sister-in-law Jean Groves, nephew Andrew and his wife Sue, watched with pride as Anthea received the insignia of the Order of Australia from her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, AC CVO Governor of New South Wales, at the investiture ceremony held at Government House on Wednesday 5th May.

The official citation for Anthea read:

Patient liaison officer at St Vincent’s General Hospital since 1994

President of the Graduate Nurses Association

Founding committee member of St Vincent’s Alumni Institute

A director of the Sisters of Charity Foundation Board.

Sister Anthea also conducts a trust fund to assist marginalised Australians, as well as playing a key role in crisis-funding for staff.

After the ceremony, family and friends gathered in the gardens of Government House to continue the celebration with afternoon tea.

While Sister Anthea recognises the support of family and friends in being awarded this honour, those who know of her untiring efforts for the needy in the community, are delighted that her commitment and dedication have been recognised.

Well deserved and congratulations, Anthea!



Sister Anthea with her OAM medallion



Mrs Sue Groves, Sister Anthea, Jean Groves and Andrew Groves



Sister Anthea and Sister Margaret Fitzgerald rsc

Walk for Africa



Cape Otway National Park

On April 24th Ros Hiser, Megan Gaffney and Colleen Jackson rsc set out from the Cape Otway Lighthouse on a “Walk for Africa” to raise money to support the ministries of our Sisters of Charity in Zambia. Last year Ros, Megan and Colleen spent 3 months in Africa with the Sisters of Charity and their colleagues in Zambia as participants in the Sisters of Charity’s GAP program.

For our fundraising we backpacked our way over two days of the Great Ocean Walk. We trekked the first day through rainstorms, wind and sunshine, across cliff tops, through forests and heath, and along beaches to our campsite at Aire River. The rain managed to stay away while we pitched our tents, prepared our meal, and played a game of cards in the moonlight. On Sunday we trekked another full day...this time the sun shone all day for us... to arrive three weary but deeply grateful women. Spectacular scenery, beautiful companionship and a wonderful cause!

To date we have received over \$4,000 for our Sisters’ works in Chikuni and Maamba (Zambia). We know from our time in Africa that this relatively small sum will make a real difference: it will educate a family for a year, provide seed for a crop, support an HIV home nursing program, and more. Ros, Megan and Colleen are deeply grateful for the donations, prayer and encouragement of so many!

Contributed by Colleen Jackson rsc



Blessing of New Tea Gardens Parish Centre



Sister Margaret Valentine rsc with parishioner Brian Lourey

This beautiful, new and very spacious building was an initiative of Margaret Valentine rsc and the Pastoral Council. Many parishioners, including Margaret, came together giving long hours of their time and talents to bring this new centre to life.

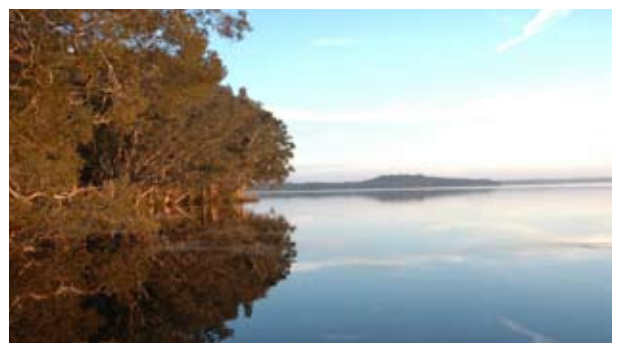
About 85 parishioners attended the Blessing and Opening, which was followed by afternoon tea, where tables were laden with country-cooked sponge cakes, slices, and every other delicious treat imaginable!

Unfortunately due to another commitment, Bishop Michael Malone was unable to attend but sent his greetings. In his place, Father Derrick Garner, Parish Priest of Raymond Terrace officiated. He concluded his very beautiful blessing prayers with these words: *"May this be a place of community where those who gather here witness to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ"*.

Congratulations Margaret on a wonderful achievement.



The new Tea Gardens Parish Centre



Tranquility! The nearby lakes of Port Stephens

Contributed by Jean Montgomery



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