



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
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Keep in touch

Vale, Mr Peter Ferris AM KCSG

It was with great sadness that we learnt, on 1st May, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, of the death of Mr Peter Ferris, a man of deep faith and commitment. Peter passed away peacefully at Sacred Heart Palliative Care Unit after a battle with cancer, surrounded by his wife Barbara and his beloved family.

Apart from the Sisters of Charity themselves, few have contributed more to St Vincent's Darlinghurst than Peter. Peter also made an enormous contribution to the life and Mission of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, through his role as Financial Adviser, Chair of the Advisory Finance Committee and inaugural Chair and driving spirit behind the establishment of the Sisters of Charity Foundation. Peter's wise advice and his strong belief that money is to be put at the service of people, also assisted in the guidance of Religious throughout Australia, at the time of the introduction of the GST.

Peter's contribution began with various roles in the Health Services of the Sisters. After three decades of service to the Mission of the Sisters of Charity, Peter stepped down as Chairman of the Trustees of St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Limited, in June 2011. During this time, Peter also served on the Sisters of Charity Health Service Board, and was a Trustee of St Vincent's Clinic. The fact that St Vincent's Darlinghurst is regarded as the preeminent model for a health campus in Australia today, is in no small measure due to Peter's leadership.

It is clear that Peter had a genuine love for both the Sisters of Charity and their healthcare mission, in particular its service of the poor.



Peter Ferris AM KCSG

He has overseen significant growth and development across each of the key areas of healthcare, bio-medical research and education.

In his role as Chairman of the Trustees, Peter advocated on behalf of the St Vincent's Hospital Trust to ensure it best served the Mission of the Sisters of Charity, to bring the healing ministry of Christ to all we serve.

The Mission was a foundation principle for all his interactions and decisions. He was a devoted Catholic and epitomised what it was to be true to these Christian values. It is clear that Peter had a genuine love for both the Sisters of Charity and their healthcare mission, in particular its service of the poor. This was shown in many ways, but not least in his devotion to the work of Gorman House.

His insight, practicality, wisdom and compassion have influenced the many of us who had the privilege to work with him or to come into contact with him. Peter was a true gentleman, unassuming, gracious and wise.

Peter's leadership and involvement on the St Vincent's Darlinghurst Campus will be greatly missed – our thriving Campus that exists today bears testament to this.

His service and contribution to St Vincent's and the Sisters of Charity has been nothing short of extraordinary and this contribution has been appropriately recognised by both Church and State.

Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Barbara and their children.

Peter Ferris – rest in peace.

With thanks to Mr Robert Cusack, CEO, St Vincent's Private & Mater Hospitals, for much of this tribute.

'Our Lady' finds new life

Painting restored to near original state

The Congregational Archives has had some testing times with Sydney's extreme weather. Last year, a large oil painting fell off the wall. The high humidity had caused the wooden picture rail the painting was mounted on, to expand, releasing the hanging clasps. Luckily the damage was confined to the frame.

Our conservator, David Stein, thought it was also another way of the painting telling us it was time for a bit of general maintenance, as paint had started to flake in small areas, the varnish was discoloured, and the two wooden panels on which the paint was applied were out of alignment.

The painting, *Our Lady and St John* was a gift to the Sisters from Dr Ullathorne. Dr Ullathorne, as many of you would know, accompanied the pioneer Sisters to Australia from Ireland. Christie's have attributed the work to 'A Follower of Jan van Scorel,' one of the Flemish masters (1459-1562). 'A Follower' could be a contemporary of the artist, or a painter who worked in a later period, imitating his style. You can see van Scorel's work today in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Most of his paintings are portraits or works with religious themes. According to the Rijksmuseum online catalogue:

'Jan van Scorel was one of the first Northern Netherlandish painters to visit Italy. In 1522 in Rome he entered the service of the Dutch Pope, Adrian VI, where he was appointed curator of antiquities at the Vatican. After returning to the Netherlands he entered the Church in Utrecht. Thanks to his stay in Italy and his acquaintance with the work of Michelangelo and Raphael he played a crucial role in the introduction of the Renaissance to the Netherlands.'

As for the painting? Today, it is back on our wall on a new hanging rail, looking resplendent in its newly found colours. If you're in the area, please drop by to have a look.



The painting is re-hung in the Archives with the help of a professional hanger.

Retreat ... just what they needed!

by Heather Grant-Campbell

They breed them tough in the bush, but even the toughest deserve a little pampering once in a blue moon.

That's the philosophy of Sister Christine, coordinator of Downs & West Community Support, a ministry supported by the Sisters of Charity, which provides support to people living in rural and remote areas of Queensland.

Requests from Queensland Rural, Regional and Remote Women's Network QLD (QRRRW) and Rhealth QLD for Sister Christine, to facilitate and organise Dragonfly health and wellness retreats in two locations, were well received. Plans immediately commenced, and two retreats were held in the Bunya Mountains and Highfields, Toowoomba. All 107 participants, from the South Burnett, Wide Bay, Darling Downs, Western Downs, and Granite Belt had weathered Queensland's flood disasters in the past two years, and drought before that.

For three days and at no-cost, the participants gathered with like-minded women and recharged their batteries by experiencing several relaxation therapies, namely: massage, meditation, reflexology, yoga, tai chi, various beauty therapies, singing and painting.

Sister Christine said:

"The women were aged from 30 to 85 and all have been doing it tough, putting themselves last – as many women do – to keep their families and farms afloat."

New foundations

Heritage fence restored at Mononia convent

In the early months of 2011, the fence at our convent, Mononia, in Brunswick St Fitzroy, began to lean slightly towards the footpath! This became a safety issue. Some preliminary 'first aid' was applied to restore the fence to an upright position, but as this was not satisfactory, it was decided that the fence needed 'major work'.

Because it was heritage classified, the fence had to be dismantled and stored while new foundations were laid. To do the work, part of the garden had to be dug up and some of the roses removed. The work was slow and tedious. The workers met various problems – unexpected depth and strength of tree roots, bad weather, more and more 'red tape' and the like. The Sisters in the community were most patient during this long period.

In May, everyone was delighted to see the newly restored fence back on its original site, re-set into stronger foundations. Some turf has been laid and roses and other plants will be added to the garden. Along the fence line, a row of *Photinia Robusta* will be planted to replace the Cypress trees which grew there previously.

The new fence and garden have certainly enhanced our convent and we look forward to enjoying our 'renovated' surroundings.



The newly restored fence at last! Garden beds ready for plantings.
Photo courtesy Bernadette Culhane rsc

Recuperation, rejuvenation, remedial and relaxation sessions and maintaining good health are all part of recovery and rebuilding their lives. Qualified general and mental health practitioners, nurses and counsellors provided a listening ear and support. They supervised an on-site mini medical health check, K10 psychological distress test, hearing test, and pap smear for participants. Appointment times were made for those women who expressed the need to have a mammogram and they were taken to Toowoomba General Hospital where this test was done.

Downs & West Community Support regularly runs Wellness Day for country women, and continues to offer encouragement and practical support to a large number of families in the country.

Please visit the new DWCS website (currently under construction):

www.downsandwestcommunitysupport.org



Sr Jeannie (right) benefits from hand beauty therapy.

Religious Sisters of Charity

50 Years in Nigeria (1961-2011)

The following are some excerpts of Sr Mathilde Harnischfeger's account of the wonderful celebrations she attended in Nigeria. More photos can be found on our website:

www.sistersofcharity.org.au



“It was a great honour for me to be invited by Sr Imelda O’Brien, to join with the community to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Sisters of Charity (Irish) in Nigeria.

I had ministered in Nigeria for a number of years, returning to Australia in 2006 – but the invitation was such a surprise!

After the long journey, I was delighted to be met by Sr Augustina and Emeka, the driver, after I came through customs. Emeka had been the driver when I was in Nigeria before and he remembered me.

As we drove into St Anne's Compound, the tree in the centre of the beautiful garden that I had tended when it was first planted, had grown higher and wider (see photo above).

As I was taken into the house, I was shown to my old room – it was like ‘coming home!’ Then Sr Imelda came and took me to the Regional House for dinner and to renew acquaintances. I presented Sr Imelda with a gift from our Congregation – a beautiful ‘message stick’ and altar cloth. It lay in front of the Chapel altar all the time. It was admired by many.

The day of the celebration began with the solemn procession of the Mass. The young sisters danced into the church, followed by Acolytes, priests, the Vice Provincial of the Redemptorists, the Bishop of Bomadi and the Cardinal, Anthony Alobumni Okogie.

The singing filled the church and the Cardinal delivered a fine homily. Sr Imelda had bought a special cloth with the Crest, which was manufactured in Nigeria and worn by staff. After the Mass, the celebration continued with a banquet of food provided by the Catholic Women's League. There was music and dancing and speeches and finally the cutting of the cake, all making it such a memorable occasion.

I was fortunate enough to be taken to various familiar places and met old friends, in particular four adult literacy students – Rosa, Kate, Chimeze and Clementina – I laughed and wept with them. At the schools I visited, the children sang welcome songs! It was so touching.



Opposite page:

The famous tree in St Anne's Compound in front of the Regional House.

This page (top to bottom):

The Novices and Postulants present hand-made gifts to Sr Mathilde.

Ladies of the Catholic Women's League.

The Sisters, Novices, Postulants and Fr George after the Mass on 22nd May.

There was a second celebration on 22nd May, which was extra special, with Mass at St Anne's Chapel for sisters, Novices and Postulants, friends and workers.

The celebrant, Fr George Quigley S.J., gave a moving homily as he spoke about the Sisters of Charity. He compared the community as 'being a home where we are welcome and where we take our gloves off before we enter. It is a place where we are accepted for who we are and can be ourselves.'

After Mass, a photo of the whole group was taken.

I will always be grateful for being able to be a part of this wonderful experience."



Project Dreaming Tracks

celebrates 10 Years

by Margaret Costigan rsc

Preamble

Since 2003 during Reconciliation Week, Project Dreaming Tracks (PDT) – a Cross Cultural Outreach Agency founded by Joyce Smith, Mutthi Mutthi, Ellie Whitaker, Writer and Community Worker, assisted by Margaret Costigan rsc, have been mounting an exhibition at St Francis Pastoral Centre in Melbourne's CBD. Lorraine Nelson was the first coordinator of this event and at our Official Opening this year she was one of the speakers reflecting on her journey into the art world, since then, including her excellent work with the CLC Eltham students.

This year, PDT's 10th anniversary, instead of suggesting a particular meaning to the exhibition theme, 'Dreaming as One,' Project Dreaming Tracks asked people to put into words their understanding of these words. For this article in KIT, we would like to share some excerpts from the theme, photos and reflections from some of the participants at the exhibition. The full article and photos can be found on our website:

www.sistersofcharity.org.au



Image above: Palm Island, photographic print by Steve McClaren.

Images top: Speakers Georgia and Rebecca (Yr 11, CLC Eltham) with Yr 7's art work.

Chris Linton with painting 'Indigenous Animals' (used for exhibition catalogue cover).

Theme of 'Dreaming As One'

"To make him whole
lot one family."

Jarinyanu David Downs (1925-1995),
Wangkajunga man and artist,
Fitzroy Crossing.

'Dreaming as One' is an art exhibition which invites artists to explore Indigenous culture, country and history. For traditional Aboriginal people these concepts are encompassed by the Dreaming or Dreamtime. In the Dreaming the past is still fervently alive in the present moment and will remain so in the future. In the Dreamtime there is no time, as we commonly understand it, instead the ancient past is continuously renewed for the future in the present.

Art is one of the ways Aboriginal people communicate with and maintain a oneness with the Dreaming and renew the spirits of the ancestral creators. It is a means of celebrating the connection between the creator beings, ancestral country and Indigenous people.

Cameron McGregor

Reflections on the theme

The dreaming is a culture. The culture is unconditional respect.

Djarro Lambadgee

Hands reaching out
in a healing touch,
Walking the journey
as one.

Students – CLC Eltham

Diamond Jubilee

Sr Maria Carmel Cullen rsc

The Mass of Gratitude and Thanksgiving of Sister Maria Carmel's Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession, was celebrated on Tuesday 24 January, in the beautiful Giovanni Chapel located at St Vincent's Hospital Kangaroo Point, Brisbane QLD. Sisters of Charity, staff, patients and residents gathered to share in the celebration, and to acknowledge the years of commitment and loving service of their friend and colleague.

The celebrations continued at Mt. Olivet Convent as the Sisters gathered around the beautifully decorated dining room table. A special prayer was prayed to recognise Maria Carmel and each of the Sisters celebrating their Diamond and Golden Jubilees at this time. During this prayer the Sisters presented Maria Carmel with a gift, a frame of the Prayer of Blessing and a corsage of little pink roses which she wore on the bodice of her dress.

Sr Maria Carmel summed up her life:

"My life has been blessed. My heart is filled with thanks for all that I have received and for all that I have been able to do.

The motto I chose many years ago, *'To love Thee O my God and to be loved by Thee'* has been my constant prayer and this is what has given me the strength and the courage to do all I can for people.

I thank the Sisters, my family and my friends for all their love and support over the years and especially the gifts, cards and flowers given to me at this time of jubilee.

Thank you all so much."



A happy Sr Maria about to 'cut the cake.'

Farewell

Sr Cate O'Brien rsc

From the Parish Bulletin of Corinda-Graceville

The Parish of Corinda-Graceville in Brisbane farewelled Sr Cate O'Brien as she concluded seven years of generous ministry in the Parish, to undertake a renewal course.

They commented: *"She has worked diligently, from pastoral visitation, to coordinating sacramental preparation. Sr Cate, as the friendly face of hospitality, has welcomed parents into baptismal preparation, assisted people in the loss of loved ones, and has witnessed to the love and compassion of our God. She has promoted the proclamation of the gospel through the RCIA, Lenten programs and various prayer and faith sharing groups. There are a wide variety of parish involvements that she has nurtured and maintained. For all this, the parish is very grateful."*

As they said farewell, they wished her all the very best in her sabbatical and prayed that the month of May would be a time of refreshment and renewal. They also prayed God's blessing on wherever God (through her order) is inviting Sr Cate into the future.

The God of the resurrection has enlightened the minds of disciples,

And enlivened them through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

May God bless you with the life of the Spirit for ever.

May God bless you and keep you.

May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May God direct your steps to himself, and show you how to walk in charity and peace, and in the warmth of love in all those whom you meet.



A friend farewells Sr Cate (right).

Obituaries

We remember each deceased Sister with love and pray for her.



Sr Anne Mary Reynolds rsc

Sr Anne Mary died on 6th March 2012

Sr Anne Mary and her siblings grew up on a dairy farm in Casino. She was the eldest of the thirteen children of Bernard and Jessie Reynolds. The qualities of a 'country girl' – hospitality, kindness and generosity – were a hallmark in Anne Mary's life.

Anne Mary was professed as a Sister of Charity on 23rd January 1950. It was just two years ago, in January 2010, that she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee and this was a great source of joy to her. Her major ministry during her life as a Sister of Charity was that of pastoral care.

In Sydney, Anne Mary ministered in transit and around the corridors of St Vincent's Hospital, greeting and welcoming people. No one doubted the respect, love and care she had for them. Anne Mary was never short of a word. Sometimes, she would be affectionately referred to as 'Sister Have-A-Chat'! She could engage with all kinds of people – from Prime Ministers to the aged and lonely men and women who were often seen around Darlinghurst.

The love Anne Mary had for her siblings, nieces, nephews, grand nieces and nephews was unbounded. She was always interested in each family member and their lives. Her thoughtfulness was shown in phone calls to 'keep in touch', or cards for birthdays, engagements, weddings, or gifts of crocheted outfits and booties for new babies. Anne Mary's family deeply appreciated her kindness.

When Sr Anne Mary concluded her years of ministering in pastoral care, she retired to *Marycrest*, Kangaroo Point, Queensland. She continued a caring role of support for residents by the interest she showed and the conversations she had with them. Some chronic health matters necessitated hospitalisation from time to time for Anne Mary. She never complained but cheerfully bore the pain and suffering. It was during one of these hospital stays – 6th March 2012, that Anne Mary died.

Someone will say ... she has gone ... gone where? The loss of sight is in us ... not in her ... there will be others, many others who take up the glad shout ... here she comes

Many will have welcomed you Anne Mary ... I expect by now you have 'had a chat' with a higher power and will have organised the first of many of the right Royal banquets which will only be found in heaven

God bless you and may you rest in peace.

Sr Marie Bernadette Wunsch rsc

Sr Marie Bernadette died on 21st March 2012

Sr Marie Bernadette was born in country Condobolin in NSW to William and Eileen Wunsch, and was part of a large family of seven girls and five boys. Marie Bernadette loved the opportunity of returning north to holiday with her family when possible. The love she had for her family was obvious in the stories she would share with the community.

The community will long carry a special memory of the stories of the great celebration of her 80th birthday in 2010. Probably because of her country upbringing, Marie Bernadette had a great love for the beauty of nature, particularly roses. She loved to walk in the garden at Mononia, admiring them.

She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1952 and throughout her religious life, her ministry was in healthcare and staff ministry. Marie Bernadette's special character trait was being present to people in all walks of life.

In the emergency department at St Vincent's Melbourne, homeless people would seek Marie Bernadette's attention, knowing they could rely on her compassion.

Stories that were heard at the wake for Marie Bernadette showed a woman with a great heart and a sense of humour, who cared about people and then connected with them in practical, supporting ways. The tributes in the newspapers, phone calls and flowers sent to the community also bear witness to her wisdom, her care and her outreach to so many people in varied ways.



Marie Bernadette was the personification of the multi-tasking woman. In the community, while the rest of the Sisters were thinking about what might need to be done, she had gone ahead and done it! Her practical nature of hospitality and care was a gift to us all.

The staff at St Vincent's Melbourne believe that Marie Bernadette was the heart and soul of their hospital for more than thirty years, representing the Sisters as the public face of St Vincent's. Her compassion and care, especially for those in need, was inspirational. Her life gave witness to her belief that healthcare is built on love, and that healing only begins when patients are respected.

Marie Bernadette died in St Vincent's Hospital on 21st March 2012. May she be enjoying the reward of her life of fidelity and goodness.



Sr Leonore Murphy rsc

Sr Leonore died on 11th April 2012

Sr Leonore was the seventh of the eight children of John and Mabel Murphy. The family lived in Clifton Hill and three of the girls – Sisters M. Eulalia, Martha and Leonore, were Sisters of Charity. Throughout the congregation, the Murphy sisters' creative abilities were renowned. Leonore was a Sister of Charity for 73 years.

As she began her professed life, Leonore trained as a teacher and became a gifted educator. From 1956 she was an assistant in the Sisters of Charity Teacher Training College at Potts Point. She was a lecturer and gave demonstration lessons for the Sisters who were studying to become teachers. We all hoped to capture Leonore's love and enthusiasm for teaching.

Despite her expertise, Leonore was always open to further learning. She mastered *Cuisenaire* (Mathematics innovation) and was a trail blazer for the introduction of *Words in Colour* (Reading/Spelling innovation) in Australia. In 1971, she conducted an Overseas Lecture Tour to PNG and other countries on the study of *Words in Colour* and was the author of several books on this topic.

Leonore is particularly remembered for her artistic talents. Her attention to detail was remarkable. It enabled her to produce beautiful paintings or create intricate candle artwork for Baptism gifts, Jubilees or weddings. Her calligraphy work was quite magnificent. In fact, some of the cards Leonore has made for Sisters on special occasions are still their treasured possessions.

It was such a pleasure to be in community with Leonore. She had a great community spirit and her quick wit, 'quirky' sense of humour and expressive language, gave us many a laugh! She liked to be involved and always put her whole heart and soul into community activities.

In the latter part of Leonore's active ministry, she took on part-time remedial education in schools at Strathmore, Kingston Beach and finally at Eltham. Children, who would otherwise have 'slipped through the cracks,' were taught to read and write through Leonore's expertise, patience and dedication.

When Leonore concluded her ministry at Our Lady's, Eltham, her focus on helping others continued, as assistant at the Currajeen Retreat house; assisting a mission project at St Paul's, Kew when she moved to Caritas Christi Hostel at Kew in 2000. Finally, Leonore moved to Corpus Christi Aged Care Facility at Clayton where she died on 11th April 2012. As she was willing to be a helper during life, may Leonore continue her help to us from heaven.

Sr Kathleen Kennedy rsc

Sr Kathleen died on 29th March 2012

Sr Kathleen was born in Moonee Ponds, Victoria, the fourth of five children of John and Mary Kennedy. Kathleen and her family had a close association with the Sisters of Charity from her earliest years. She, her three brothers, and sister, Moira, attended the local school conducted by the Sisters. Kathleen entered the congregation in 1940, was professed in 1942 and this year, on 27th August, she would have celebrated the 70th anniversary of her religious profession. What a life of commitment!

Kathleen became a teacher and ministered in schools in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. She was an excellent teacher who always had the welfare of her students as her main concern. We were amazed one day when a past pupil, who had kept in touch with Kathleen after leaving school, made a special trip from Queensland to visit Kathleen in hospital. It was the only gift she wanted for her 80th birthday – to visit her old teacher!

In the 1980's, Kathleen's ministry of teaching in schools concluded and she began a new ministry in the Sandy Bay Parish in Tasmania. It was in Parish ministry that Kathleen really shone. She worked tirelessly and generously to serve the community, always finding a way to meet any need. Kathleen visited the sick and elderly in their homes or in nursing homes, taking Holy Communion, praying with them while listening to their worries.



She prepared children for the sacraments, even enrolling in a calligraphy course at the age of 82 so that she could complete the certificates by hand, giving them a personal touch. Kathleen was never one for the limelight and did such a lot behind the scenes.

One of Kathleen's special gifts was flower arranging. The finished products were quite magnificent and added great beauty to a particular occasion. Kathleen had a knack of doing things perfectly – ironing altar linen, the knitted garments she made and so on.

After 23 years of this ministry, Kathleen needed to retire and agreed to move to Melbourne, where two brothers lived. She went first to the community at Fitzroy, where she was warmly welcomed. In 2011, Kathleen moved to St Catherine's Aged Care Facility at Balwyn, where she died on 29th March 2012. We will miss her gentle spirit and beautiful smile.

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Obituaries

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Sr Maria Cunningham rsc

Sr Maria died on 13th March 2012

Sr Maria (Nora Mary) Cunningham, known to her family as 'Nan', was born in Werribee, Victoria, the second eldest of the four children of Michael and Mary Cunningham. Her older brother and two younger sisters enjoyed their country upbringing and Maria loved sharing stories of those times.

The Gospel chosen for Sr Maria's Requiem Mass was the story of *The Good Samaritan*. Maria was never one to 'pass by' anyone in need. Her contribution to the ministry of healing was extraordinary. She chaired the Australia Catholic Health Care Association over a number of years and was instrumental in establishing Catholic Health Australia. She held leadership positions nationally, in hospitals in Sydney and Melbourne. She played significant roles internationally, helping and advising establishment of Health services. It was said of her that she was "a refounding person – courageous, innovative, collaborative, faith-filled." Despite the high offices Maria held, she never lost her love for serving the poor.

There was another side to Maria – she loved parties and was a great entertainer! She was seen as a homemaker, excellent cook and gardener! All would say that she was 'multi-skilled'!

After six years as Congregational Councillor and Vicar of the Congregational Leader, Maria 'retired' to the ministry of caring for families of prisoners! What an example of servant leadership – after leading a huge organisation to then move to humbly working to assist families in need. And she enjoyed it!

Maria's love for her family was strong and deep. Her nieces and nephews had not realised the enormous contribution Maria had made to health services in Australia. To them, she was just their much loved 'Aunty Nan' who made time in her busy schedule to be with family, especially for special milestones. It was always a major event when "Aunty Nan was down". She was always interested in what everyone was up to, asking 'Now tell me ...' or '... so I hear you've been ...' The family gathered on Maria's 70th birthday in January for their final get-together with her.



Perhaps Maria's true greatness was shown during her illness. She was an inspiration. Despite being stripped of her independence, her focus continued to be on others. She was grateful for the care she received and never complained. Maria died in St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne on 13th March 2012. May she rest in peace.

Farewell to Sr Maureen Parker

from St Vincent's Toowoomba

by Bev Lacey

Sister Maureen Parker, one of the two remaining Sisters of Charity at St Vincent's Hospital, will take many a happy memory with her as she moves into retirement.

Sr Maureen, who became a Sister of Charity in 1957 when she felt the call to give her life to God, came to Toowoomba to help "meet the unmet needs of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs."



Sr Maureen, on her last day at work at the Outreach Centre, before her retirement.

After almost 15 years of service in the Conversational English Classes and as coordinator of Outreach Programs at Scott St, Sr Maureen was farewelled at a surprise morning tea. She thanked everyone and said:

"It is sad it's got to come to an end, but good things will come out of it."

Sr Maureen will move to Brisbane for her retirement.

Assistance to asylum seekers and refugees

Sr Dorothy Bayliss shares some reflections about Christmas Island and her ministry there.

The view from the plane is nothing short of amazing. After hours of sea, sea and more sea, a speck of green appears. Christmas Island is in the middle of the Indian Ocean, located 2600km northwest of Perth; its closest neighbour is Java, 360km away. Although it is an Australian Territory, the island is far more reminiscent of South East Asia than anywhere in Australia.

The island is beautiful, isolated, very rugged and dangerous in many areas: the sea with the quick change in its currents and tides, the rugged slippery cliffs and the roads covered with phosphate, slippery when wet. It is a curious place with many historical and cultural influences. The local population is around 1400 permanent residents made up of Malay and Chinese who work in the mine, local council, and shops. Tourists come for diving, as the coral is the best in this part of the world, or to see the red crab migration. Others take pleasure in bird watching or hiking in the unique rain forest.



Sr Dorothy Bayliss rsc.



The island is beautiful, isolated, very rugged and dangerous in many areas.

On the North West of the island is the detention centre which holds around 500 men (sometimes more) in six different compounds. The centre is approximately 25 minutes drive from my accommodation at Poon Saan, except during the crab migration, when most roads are closed to protect the crabs. Crabs have the right of way at all times. During this time, the only road open to the centre takes about 45 minutes and a little longer when the rains are heavy and visibility poor.

There are four other camps scattered around the area, two near North West centre and two closer to the airport. These two closer camps are for families and unaccompanied minors. Altogether there are around 860+ detainees at any one time. As clients are transferred out to other detention centres, others soon take their place.

I was invited to a Muslim (Hazaragi) prayer service one day and the reality of the people's pain and suffering was brought home to me in a more tangible way.

Throughout the prayer and with many tears, several photos, one by one, were placed on the white board. The people present questioned:

"When will the killing of the Hazara people stop? Why won't the world help us? We are persecuted all over the world except Australia. It seems the only place that is willing to accept us, so that is why we come: for freedom and safety. So we are grateful to the Australian people."

They were grateful that I would join with them in their pain by attending their prayer.

I cannot do much here except to listen and show that I care. I go to the main centre three days a week just to sit and talk. On a Friday, I have special permission to take three long-stay residents out for the day. What a difference it makes for them – such a change in their faces and personalities! I look forward to this day each week, because I feel that I am doing something at least to alleviate their pain, if only for a day.

Dorothy Bayliss rsc

Conversation begins

by Vocations Subcommittee Members

Towards the end of 2011, a few people from various backgrounds were invited to form a Vocations Subcommittee, with the purpose of working out the best way forward to support Sr Anne Taylor in her role as Vocations Minister. The group met early this year, tabling a number of activities where young people would have the opportunity to meet and share with others on issues of life and faith.

The first of these activities was held on Thursday 31st May at St Vincent's College, Potts Point, taking the form of a conversation between the young and the not so young, sharing their lived experience of study.

The evening began with a small group of students, ex students, teachers and Sisters of Charity mingling and chatting to each other whilst enjoying a bowl of hot soup and sharing other delicious treats.

Rachel McLean, Director of Faith and Mission capably undertook the role of facilitator, warmly welcoming everyone and clearly outlining the format of the evening. Two students gave an open and frank summary of what study meant to them. Each had a different approach and they are to be commended of having an awareness of their own study habits and the support needed to nurture it at such a young age. Sr Libbey Byrne, Councillor of the Sisters of Charity led us into her presentation with a moving poem on learning.



Srs Libbey (left) and Anne (right) with some of the young adult students who participated in the evening's 'conversations'.

Thirst

Another morning and I wake with thirst for the goodness I do not have. I walkout to the pond and all the way God has given us such beautiful lessons. Oh Lord, I was never a quick scholar but sulked and hunched over my books past the hour and the bell; grant me, in your mercy, a little more time. Love for the earth and love for you are having such a long conversation in my heart. Who knows what will finally happen or where I will be sent, yet already I have given a great many things away, expecting to be told to pack nothing, except the prayers which, with this thirst, I am slowly learning.

Mary Oliver, *Thirst*,
Beacon Press, Boston, 2006
pp. 1, 52, 69.

Sr Libbey then presented a number of practical examples about her experience of study/learning from early school days to university and beyond, highlighting that study for her was all about life-long learning.

Rachel, applying her excellent facilitation skills, put forward leading questions with people responding with their unique stories. The session was a good and worthwhile, helpful and interesting exchange of experiences. The dialogue between the young and the not so young gave us much to ponder; it had an element of surprise and we went away with great appreciation of all that shared.

Sr Anne Taylor concluded the evening with an Examen, drawing together the Feast of the Visitation and those two women's sense of unknown expectations, full of promise, yet prepared to move forward; much like the evening conversation.

Libbey Byrne's haiku captures the sense of the evening powerfully:

Precariously
I hold all things in balance
Word, play, rest, friends, prayer.

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