



**Sisters of Charity**  
of Australia

# Keep in Touch

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## The Sisters of Charity

Mother Scholastica's  
"First Love"



Sr Scholastica Gibbons

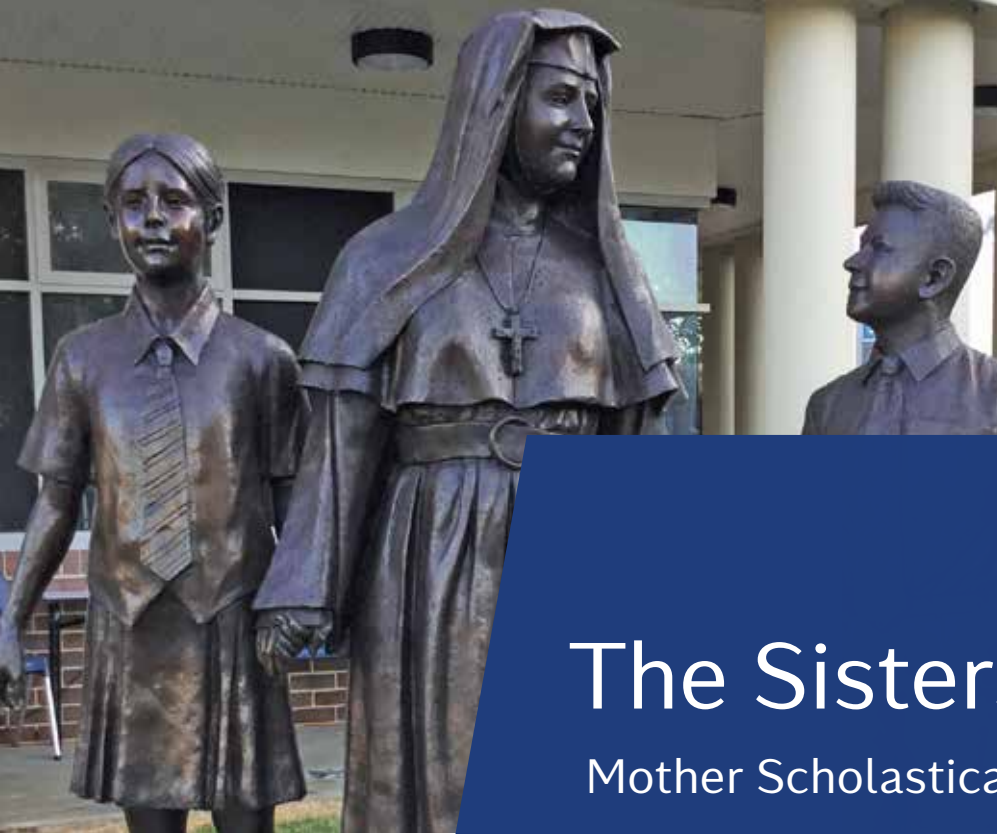
Founded by Mother Mary Aikenhead in Ireland in 1815, the Sisters of Charity were invited by Bishop John Bede Polding to come to Sydney and work in the colony. Five sisters arrived on the last day of 1838 – Mother Mary John Cahill, Sisters Mary John Baptist de Lacy, Mary Lawrence Cater, Mary Francis de Sales O'Brien and Mary Xavier Williams, a novice. From January 1839 they worked at the women's prison, the Female Factory, in Parramatta but very soon they were engaged in working with Sydney's poor and needy as well as operating schools and in 1857, opening St Vincent's Free Hospital, now located in Darlinghurst.

Geraldine Henrietta Gibbons was born in Kinsale, County Cork, in late October, 1817. Her parents made the decision to leave Ireland in 1834 to come to Australia. Geraldine entered the Sisters of Charity and took the name Scholastica. After her Religious Profession on 16th July, 1847 she was sent to work in Parramatta.

In 1848 Sr Scholastica was transferred to Sydney where she established a home for vulnerable women. This house was moved to the Carters' Barracks on Pitt Street in March 1849. She was elected the Superior General of the Sisters of Charity Congregation in 1856. In the midst of these ventures, Archbishop Polding approached Mother Scholastica and asked her to work with Him in founding and forming a new expression of Benedictine life for Australian conditions. She accepted the invitation and for the rest of her life was a woman bound to two Congregations.

Scholastica Gibbons wore the habit of the Sisters of Charity all her life but lived the rest of her life, apart from the years 1876-1885 (Sisters of Charity, Hobart, Tasmania), in the Good Samaritan communities at Rosebank and Marrickville.

[Continued on page 2](#)



# The Sisters of Charity

Mother Scholastica's "First Love" From page 1

She died on 15 October, 1901 and was buried in Rookwood cemetery. In 1945 her body was reinterred at Rosebank where she rests among many of the generations of Good Samaritans she shaped and formed. She was fondly known as the 'Founding Mother'.

To celebrate the Sesquicentenary of Rosebank College and the unveiling of the statue of Mother Scholastica, Sr Clare Nolan and Sisters were invited to gather with the College community and Sisters of the Good Samaritan, firstly at the cemetery in the grounds, to honour the founding members, followed by the Opening School Mass and then the liturgy for the blessing of the statue, in which the leaders of both Congregations had a part.



Sr Clare Nolan with Sisters of Charity gathered in front of the statue

.....  
*"We honour Mother Scholastica Gibbons, Sister of Charity, who always lived – Caritas Christi urget nos."*







Photograph 1



Photograph 2

# Archives needs your help!

## Who, what, where, when, how and why?

by Janet Howse, Congregational Archives Manager

In 2014 in the Congregational Archives, I came across six black and white photographs which had been put to the side because they were unidentified (only six you say!). At that time, the photographs were documented in a basic fashion so that we knew we had them and their location and that is where they have stayed until recently. I decided to try and solve the puzzle of who, what, where, when, how and why these photographs were taken. In January, without television reception at home for about ten days, over a couple of evenings I watched one of my favourite television dramas on DVD, *Shooting the Past*. First shown by the BBC in 1999, the drama was written by Stephen Poliakoff, and was focused around a photographic library threatened by closure, and the lives of its eccentric staff. Whilst I am not suggesting the Congregational Archives staff is "eccentric", the drama was about the importance of photographs to people, their identity and what stories the photographs can tell about people's lives. The six "box Brownie" photographs started to haunt me. The sleuthing began!

So back to our mystery six photographs. Working in and with Archives is never straightforward. I have sometimes compared our work to that of a detective solving a crime (who, what, where, when, how, why?), following the clues, piecing together the evidence,

which are often fragments of information, together to make a comprehensible explanation and to tell the story. At its basis, archival work is evidential in nature. We make conclusions based on careful examination of the evidence. Where there is conflicting evidence, we endeavour to investigate such differences and make the best possible conclusion, or we note that there is conflicting evidence, which is invariably resolved at a future date. Where we are unable to do this, we may say, "It is assumed..." or "It appears to be..." and do not claim something to be factual if we do not have good evidence. We cannot assume photographs 1 to 3 are connected, although they may very well be.

### What are the clues?

**Photograph 1** shows a Sister dressed in the traditional habit on a horse, with a man standing beside the horse looking as if he may take the reins. Why is the Sister on a horse, where is the photograph taken, when was it taken? What are the clues? There is a dark-coloured car in the left background, which appears to be from the 1930s to 1940s. Can we recognise the vegetation near the car? Where were the Sisters during the 1930s and 1940s where this could have been taken? Was it taken at St Finbarr's in Ashgrove Queensland or the holiday house at Beaconsfield in Victoria? Which Sisters do we know who could ride horses?



Photograph 4



Photograph 5

**Photograph 2** shows a young lay woman and two Sisters on the beach, which appears to be on the eastern shores of Port Phillip Bay, Victoria with a pier in the background. Is it Frankston Pier? There has been a pier here since 1857. Is the lay woman a candidate for the Congregation or is she a relative of one of the Sisters? Why are they on the beach? Some Sisters with Melbourne connections have recognised Sr Mary de Chantal Farrell in the centre of the photograph. Sr Mary de Chantal was a nurse in Melbourne for most of the 1940s to the 1960s. This is a significant finding as the Archives did not hold a photograph of Sr Mary de Chantal at all.

**Photograph 3** shows two Sisters in the traditional habit in a garden. How do we recognise the place? Can we identify the Sister on the left as her face is clearer than the Sister on the right? In what time period was the photograph taken?



Photograph 3



Photograph 6

Now we arrive at **photographs 4 to 6**, which are clearly of the same building with a grotto. Someone in the past has annotated in pencil on the reverse 'Strathmore', but consultation of photographs of 'Rosebank House' in Strathmore Victoria, which became St Vincent de Paul Convent from 1961 to 1995, shows this photograph does not appear to be of 'Rosebank House'.

A suggestion was made that it was St Margaret's Private Hospital in Launceston before the Sisters bought it and it became St Vincent's Hospital in 1944. The photograph does not resemble this either. A check was made of other properties owned by the Sisters between 1930 and 1970 and no connections have been made. Did the building belong to another Order?

**Can any Sister help us identify and date these six photographs so we can answer the questions: Who, what, where, when, how and why? And be able to tell the story behind the photographs.**

**Janet Howse**  
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# Congratulations to our Jubilarians

by Sr Clare Nolan rsc

Sr Josephine Cannell rsc,  
celebrates her **Oak Jubilee**,  
80 Years of Religious Profession  
at St Vincent's Hospital Fitzroy,  
January 29th 2017



Srs Elizabeth Costigan and Josephine Cannell

## Sr Clare's Welcome

It is with great joy and on behalf of all Sisters of Charity I welcome you here today to celebrate with Sr Josephine her 80th year of Religious Profession as a Sister of Charity! Not silver or gold or diamond or pearl but an Oak Jubilee! And how appropriate for you Josephine! The Oak has a massive root system that helps the tree to maintain its stability and sustenance as it grows. It represents longevity and wisdom. Josephine, this incredible milestone of 80 years a Sister of Charity is reserved for only a few.



This is truly a very special day for the Congregation but it is extra special in having your dear friend Archbishop Adrian Doyle from Hobart. You lived and ministered happily there for so long. A warm welcome to you Adrian. And welcome to the representatives of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and some of our Sisters of Charity Companions.



All your ministry centred around teaching Infants, Primary and Junior Secondary. Later in your life you became archivist for St Columba's College Essendon, a place that meant a lot to you. You had a special love for Tasmania and in 2007 you wrote *To the Beckoning Shores: Urged by the Love of Christ* – a short history of our early days there and the difficulties the Sisters experienced. You are a gracious lady Josephine, quietly spoken, and you have a wonderful love for the Congregation. You have a special love for your home State of Tasmania. On your Profession Day you chose the motto *God's will. Amen!*

From the beginning you have been an open hearted woman ready to do what is asked of you and affirm with your whole heart, *'Amen! So be it!'* Let us affirm AMEN! with you today Jo and through the Eucharist we are about to share let us give thanks to God for your faithful life, your loving heart, your joy in living and 80 years as a Sister of Charity!

*Jubilate Deo!  
Anima mea Dominum!*

# Blessings

on the 60th Anniversary of your Religious Profession, 9th January 2017

We celebrate with Sisters Jacinta Fong, Marie Stanley and Moira O'Sullivan and give thanks to God for all that has been over the past 60 years to this moment.



*"Returning to Galilee means treasuring in my heart the living memory of that call, when Jesus passed my way, gazed at me with mercy, and asked me to follow him."* Pope Francis



Srs M. Jacinta Fong, Marie Stanley and Moira O'Sullivan

## Sr Jacinta Fong rsc

Sixty years of faithful and loving service, devoting your whole life to the healing ministry of Christ, serving the poor and marginalised. You are always seeking what can make life easier for patients or staff as you did with your J-tube invention. You never give up on a project once you have begun. You are a selfless woman, true daughter of Mary Aikenhead and a contemplative in action. The loving care you give your garden is but a reflection of the care you give to others.

You chose a motto to guide your life as a Sister of Charity. You chose the words, *I love, I trust, I serve*. You are living witness to these words Jacinta.

## Sr Marie Stanley rsc

Trained as a Nurse, at St Vincent's, Darlinghurst, you became a Nurse Educator and instilled in your students how to become compassionate, caring and skilled nurses. In the convent you are a homemaker. You are so creative with your card-making and other little pieces that bring something



Srs Jacinta and Marie

special to others. Your attention to detail makes you homemaker and hospitable one, par excellence.

You are a country girl at heart with the generosity typical of country people! You are a quiet achiever and give of yourself to the St Vincent's Campus, especially the Sisters of Charity Outreach. You chose as your motto *Thy Kingdom Come*. You bring God's Kingdom to our world in so many ways, Marie.

## Sr Moira O'Sullivan rsc

You are a great daughter of Mary Aikenhead, Moira, with a deep love for the Congregation. You are a great Historian, Scripture scholar, Educator, Lecturer, Writer and Researcher and you generously share these gifts with others. Your marvelous book *A Cause of Trouble?* brought to light so many things. Your research and the history helped bring it alive. You are an inspiration! You made a significant contribution in Papua New Guinea where you lectured for 5 years in the Good Shepherd Seminary. You chose as your motto on this day 60 years ago:

*Ignem Mittere in Terram (Luke 12:49) – Light a fire on the earth*



Celebration of the Eucharist



# Blessings on the 50th Anniversary of your Religious Profession, 21st January 2017

Sisters Margaret Guy and Clare Nolan rsc



Srs Clare and Margaret

## Sr Margaret Guy rsc

Fifty years a Sister of Charity!  
And we have accompanied each other all of those 50 years. Being educated by the Sisters of Charity has strong meaning for you and influenced your decision to become a Sister of Charity and be an Educator. When you began training to be a Teacher you were conscientious in everything you did whether it was in the classroom, being Principal of a School, or in Community, you gave of your best. Your time at Sisters of Charity Outreach was where I saw you blossom. You were absolutely beautiful in the Parent Support Program, in the Coffee Shop, at Liverpool, Parent Support, listening to people and comforting them.

Then you became the Volunteer Educator and we were back to your giftedness as a teacher and your initiative in preparing Curriculum and Programs. You are now with the Jesuit Refugee Services meeting the needs of the poor and marginalised of our day. On our Profession Day you chose the motto, *I Am With You All Days*

to guide and strengthen your journey as a Sister of Charity. Let us continue our journey together Margaret in faith and trust.



Sr Clare's community

## Sr Clare Nolan rsc

Your Galilee was the Mater Hospital, Brisbane where you were nursing. Like the picture of Mary Aikenhead aged 20, you also were a young woman of 21 desiring to give her life to God as Mary Aikenhead did, serving the sick and poor. And it was the Sisters of Charity at Mt St Michael's, Ashgrove who influenced you in which Congregation you would live out that call. Your whole life as a Sister of Charity in ministry has been given to leadership roles.

You spent twelve years in Congregational Leadership which included growing our Health Services and making sure the healing ministry of Christ was carried safely into the future.

The Sisters saw your deep love of the Congregation and wanted you to be the Congregational Leader who would be inspirational and pastoral. And that you are. You love your vocation to the Sisters of Charity and you express so clearly the joy you have in serving others. Underpinning this is a favourite mantra of yours, *living the joy of the Gospel*. You have a big, loving heart Clare and hands well worn.

It is not surprising Clare that you would choose as your motto on your Profession day fifty years ago the words of St Paul, *All things to all people (1Corg:22)*. As our Congregational Leader you have been blessed. May those blessings continue to cover you, protect you, and guide you Clare. Clare also means 'transparent life.'

***Your Sisters in Christ, Sisters of Charity of Australia***



Sr Margaret and her sister, Wendy





Sr Aileen Thomas rsc

# Words of remembrance

## Sr Aileen Thomas rsc

(29 July 1939 - 8 January 2017)

In the days after I informed our community of Sister Aileen's death I received some beautiful emails from a number of staff, families and ex-students. Once they expressed their shock at the speed with which we had lost this precious member of our community and the loss of this vital connection to the Sisters of Charity, they began to share their memories. Some of these included: "We will always remember her kindness and all the assistance she has given to our daughters," and "A gracious lady who loved the Bethlehem community."

Sister Aileen would have been both humbled and embarrassed by these tributes. She was the first to admit that she wasn't perfect. Those of us who knew her well knew that she wasn't always easy; she could be damned stubborn and was a little change averse.

As I got to know her I grew to realise that underneath this sometimes brusque exterior was a human being, just like the rest of us; full of insecurities, vulnerabilities and the odd flaw.

Sr Aileen chose a life of service to others devoting 28 years of her life to the Bethlehem College community. Using her extraordinary empathy and compassion and, impelled by the love of Christ, she strove in simple ways to make a difference to the lives of others. She could instantly recognise and connect easily with the struggling learner or the lonely, nervous or emotionally fragile student or parent, seeing in them aspects of her own vulnerabilities and life experiences.

At the end of 2015 she came to me to tell me that she felt she needed to step down from some of her responsibilities. She asked if she could continue to be of service to the community once a week as a volunteer in the Learning Support team; it was here that I think she did some of her finest work with some of our most vulnerable students.

When talking of her age and inability to do some of the things she used to do, Sister Aileen would often use the expression: "This Old Gray Mare ain't what she used to be". Sr Aileen may have been suggesting that her contributions to the community were diminishing as the years went by, but for our community, she continued her most important role which was to be a living witness to the mission of the sisters, the Charism of the Mary Aikenhead and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*She will be irreplaceable!*

**by Paula Bounds,  
Principal of Bethlehem  
College Ashfield**

.....  
*"We will always remember her kindness and all the assistance she has given to our daughters."*

*"Aileen was a gracious lady who loved the Bethlehem community."*

# We remember...

## Sr Carol Pedersen rsc

(14 June 1942 - 10 February 2017)



Sr Carol Pedersen rsc

.....

*"It is with deep sadness we come to say goodbye to our 'gem' – Carol! On behalf of all Sisters of Charity I welcome you here this morning to join with us in celebrating Carol's life and giving thanks to God for the gift she has been to so many in so many different ways."*

Sr Clare Nolan rsc

### Words of Remembrance

I extend my prayers and sympathy to Ron, Helen and the extended Pedersen and Doyle families today. You have lost a sister, aunt and cousin. We have lost a unique, *true blue*, as was mentioned last night, Sister of Charity and friend.

Carol completed her nurses training in 1963 before she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity on 2nd February 1964 along with myself and ten others – (I am the last one standing!). We were professed in 1966. This was a particularly challenging time for most of us when we had to conform to a way of life that did not recognise uniqueness.

After profession Carol returned to nursing at SVH Sydney then Toowoomba. It was here that she hurt her back which put an end to her nursing career. She returned to Sydney and commenced her Social Work while working with people in need in Darlinghurst. She became a familiar sight on Anzac Parade riding her bike to the Uni of NSW while dressed in habit and her beloved elastic side boots.

After completing her doctorate Carol became a trailblazer in ways of helping people in need from all works of life – I know Dr Alex Wodak will speak about Carol's unique contribution to her work in this area. Her appointments during these years included Project Officer to the UNI of Western Sydney and Consultant with South West Sydney Area Health. She was always someone who established services and moved on to the next need. Carol then embarked on an Advanced Diploma in Homeopathy and eventually obtained her Homeopathy Caravan, called *Providence* that saw her travelling with *Speck, Darcy, Mlee & later Pudd* to outback NSW, Queensland and Victoria helping the poor and the marginalised. It was often a harsh and frugal existence but she loved it and made many friends.

Sr Clare Nolan, at the time of our Golden Jubilee last year wrote to Carol and I quote, *'Your unique personality allowed you to relate to all types of people, top professionals, researchers, as well as the homeless, street people, addicts, lost and lonely. You were always someone who moved on to the next need'* – referring to Carol's travels with her four legged companions, Clare wrote *'Pope Francis would be pleased to see you bringing the healing power of God's grace to all in need staying close to the marginalised and being a "shepherd with the smell of sheep"*. The mark of a true follower of Jesus.

Carol certainly was unique. She dared to be different and had the courage to be herself. Likewise, she encouraged and accepted others and affirmed them in their differences. However, at times she would shake us out of our comfort zones by her non-conforming stance like turning up to a function in shorts and elastic sided boots! Maybe we were envious of her freedom to be herself. She was not judgemental, accepting of others and their idiosyncrasies; Carol lived the message in today's first reading, 'Could anyone accuse those that God has Chosen. When God acquits, could anyone condemn?'

Today's Gospel of the Good Shepherd is very apt. We will never know how many lives Carol touched and healed during her years as a Sister of Charity.

## We remember... Sr Claudia Doyle rsc

(11 March 1923 - 21 February 2017)



Sr Claudia Doyle rsc

### "Sing no sad songs for me!"

This is a line from a Christina Rossetti poem, one I first heard quoted by Claudia years ago because, living at Lewisham, she had heard Fr Dan McAuliffe's standard funeral homily so many times that she knew it off by heart!

The line implies no nonsense. This could have been Claudia's Personal motto! In death, she didn't want us to talk about her at vigils and in eulogies. Instead, the readings chosen for our mass of Christian Burial remind us of Claudia's vocation and the Christian vocation of us all. (Isaiah 43:1-5 and John 15:9-17)

The readings are a combination which speak to us of the call to discipleship and to love. In the reading from the prophet Isaiah, we learn of our identity as God's beloved creatures and in John's Gospel, Jesus emphatically reminds us that, because we are beloved, we too must become disciples, and love so that others, in turn, may know that they too are beloved of God.

Continued page 12

She had gifts that put her in touch with people across a spectrum of society, the sick, the women of the west, indigenous women, the marginalised, the homeless and broken people or anyone who asked her help. Carol was inspired by the maxim of our Foundress Mary Akenhead, 'to give to the poor and needy for love what the rich buy with money'.

Carol was never one to accept accolades – she had just been there to help. When one of our sisters contacted Carol after hearing a gentleman relate a story of how Carol had saved his life, she had helped him change his life from being a homeless alcoholic to now having a family and his own business, her reaction was 'It wasn't me, he did the hard work.' Some years ago, Carol spent a period of renewal at the MSC Monastery at Douglas Park, here she met an elderly Brother who had an ulcerated leg. He was not used to having women around, let alone being tended to by one. In no time, no one else could dress his leg, but Carol. She even ended up taking him for a holiday to Shellharbour much to the amazement of his confrères.

Ron was telling me about walking through Kings Cross with Carol late at night and being terrified that they would be mugged at any minute. Much to his surprise and I would think to his relief, as they feared each would be mugged, he/she would look up and say *hello Carol*.

From the time of her diagnosis in 2012 Carol showed great determination in fighting the cancer. She wanted to live long enough for us to celebrate our Golden Jubilee – telling the Doctor some eighteen months ago to keep us both alive till August. Happily, she achieved the goal and could participate and enjoy the occasion. No new outfit – just a new Kathmandu jacket to go with the jeans and boots. Another first for Sisters of Charity jubilees – I am sure she was more comfortable than I was.

Carol wanted to stay at home as long as possible and was very grateful to Srs Dorothy, Gaye and Karen whose dedication and care made this possible. She was appreciative of the special support of Sr Annette O'Connor, Sisters from the Village and her four very close friends. Carol planned the final stages of her journey as Sr Clare could attest to the number of texts she received concerning these plans. One of the hardest decisions was handing over her faithful companion *Pudd*, (*who is with us this morning*). She gave a directive that there was to be no 'Jabbering prayers' around her bed. Carol showed great gratitude for the care given her by the doctors, nurses and other staff in palliative care. When you asked her how she was, the response was I'm OK, that woman over there is worse off, she has two kids. She would not accept any special consideration, even to the end. When the nurses suggested moving her to a private room, her response up until the last few days was 'give it to someone who needs it more than me.'

Thank you, Carol. It was your uniqueness as a Sister of Charity and your ability to be aware and truly present, seeing into the heart of things that enabled you to live in the presence of God everywhere. May you join your parents Margaret and James in the peace of the Heavenly Kingdom.

by Sr Maria Wheeler rsc



## We remember... Sr Claudia Doyle rsc

From page 11

This discipleship will cost us everything as we take up our cross daily and lay down our lives in the service of others. Claudia, as a daughter, sister, aunt, teacher and friend practised this in her days as a Sister of Charity, a sister of love.

Isaiah, in poetic form, writes for God's chosen people living in exile reminding them of their identity as divinely chosen servants, called to live their lives in a dignified and glorified way. (These and other adverbs we hear today help paint the picture of the dignified woman we farewell!!) Her last years lived in the "exile" of aged care would, at times, have sought comfort from such phrases as: *you are mine; I will be with you; you are precious in my eyes and I love you.*

In our gospel reading from John, Jesus called Claudia and each one of us to live in his love by keeping the commandment to love. God's love is demanding – it prunes and challenges Jesus in his ministry, and also prunes and challenges us throughout our lives. Those of us who knew Claudia will have some idea of the pruning and challenges over the almost 94 years of her life. The evangelist tells us that choosing to accept pruning and challenge on the way

of discipleship ensures that we will live in the love of God and go on to bear lasting fruit and fullness of joy.

Bearing fruit means making wise choices and decisions for the work of God, acting thoughtfully over a lifetime; discerning what thoughts, words and actions best serve the intentions of a loving God in this world, in the situations in which we find ourselves. Chosen by Christ, God knows the fruit of Claudia's life and the lives of us all. Each of us is privileged to have glimpsed some of that fruit in the time we have spent in her company over the years. Her love and service of others was done quietly, faithfully and above all, with "no nonsense"!

In the poem Claudia used to quote, Christina Rossetti, another woman of no nonsense speaking to her beloved, writes:

*When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree:  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget.*

Claudia, Aunty Mavis, Mae-mae, Sister of Charity urged on by the love of Christ, beloved disciple, lover of family and friends, of humour, of history, of words and crosswords, we wish you complete joy!

**by Libbey Byrne rsc**

# Welcome

## to our new look Keep in Touch magazine!

We are pleased to share our new visual identity with you in this first edition of *Keep in Touch* for the year, which is the result of an in-depth Communication Plan which the Congregation has been working on since 2015.

We are also very close to launching our new website and our e-newsletter. If you would like to subscribe to our regular e-newsletter, *Walking With Us*, please subscribe now at

[sistersofcharity.org.au/subscribe](https://sistersofcharity.org.au/subscribe)

If you would like to receive an electronic version of this magazine instead of a printed copy, please email

[james.griffiths@rscoffice.com](mailto:james.griffiths@rscoffice.com)

with this request.

We hope you enjoy this issue and we encourage you to *Keep In Touch* with us!

**by the Sisters of Charity  
Communications  
Implementation Committee**



**Sisters of Charity**  
of Australia

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