



**Sisters of Charity**  
of Australia

# Keep in Touch

KIT  
MAGAZINE

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## Inside this month

Welcome to the March 2019 edition of *Keep in Touch*, where we look forward to a coming milestone and celebrate the ministries of our Sisters.

Among our stories, a sneak peek at our new Heritage Centre, we hear from Sisters in Melbourne who are well and truly into ecological conversion, and celebrate the jubilees of another three of our Sisters.

We journey with Sr Sesarina and Sr Clare to Sr Ses' birthplace in Fiji and discover the fascinating story of Sr Loretta Bani and her ministries.

We also farewell Sr Philippine Humphreys RIP.



## Welcome to KIT: The March edition!

It's already March and our year is well and truly on its way. We have many exciting events coming up this year and into 2020. That's when the Australian Church will hold its first Plenary since 1937! The Sisters of Charity of Australia are among the many Australians supporting this vital renewal in the life of the Church.

In May, I will be attending the XXI Plenary Assembly of the Union of International Superiors General in Rome. The theme this year is "Sowers of Prophetic Hope." There will also be workshops around the UISG plenary, touching on: Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults; Protection of minors; Canon Law for religious life; and Communication for religious women.

Before going to Rome, I will be in Dublin, to meet with the general leadership team of the Religious Sisters of Charity, and talk with them as they approach their Chapter in July this year.

Continued on page 2 →

# Welcome to KIT – the March edition!

From page 1

Last month, the Congregation commenced Refounding 2019 using contemplative dialogue circles in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, addressing the question "What is God calling us to be now?"

We are moving forward into a new phase of our refounding story and journey. These contemplative dialogue circles will also continue to develop the four themes that became the core of our Congregational Gathering last year – the Constitutions, Ecological Conversion, Celebrating Life and Living as Religious Women, and Margins – Crossing Thresholds.

We also continue to work with Catholic Religious Australia on our Emerging Futures – what life will look like for apostolic, religious into the future.

We look forward to our Patronal Feast Day on August 15. But before then, there will be a great cause for celebration in the Congregation.

In June, the Sisters of Charity's Heritage Centre will open at Potts Point, on the very door step of where the Sisters opened their first school in Australia, more than 160 years ago. In the next issue of *Keep In Touch*, we will show you what has happened inside the Convent in Rockwell Crescent to make it into a Centre of hospitality, information, and reflection, and be a meeting place.

A meeting room and contemplative spaces, including the St Vincent's Chapel and courtyard will provide an environment not only for education and information but also for peace, and reflection.

So that is what is coming up. Now to bring you up to date with what is happening in this issue of *KIT* – you will find ministry stories on Srs Patricia Walker and Loretta Bani, jubilee celebrations for Srs Colleen Bell, Suzette Clark, and Kathleen Doohan.

During the Christmas period, we farewelled one of our Sisters, Philippine Humphreys. You will find a remembrance of her at the end of this issue of *KIT* – as well as one of the stories shared at her Requiem Mass by her niece, Anne Keane.

Please enjoy this edition of *KIT* and thank you to all who contributed.

**Sr Clare Nolan**  
Congregational Leader

## Care of our common home

After the Gathering last year, Srs Mary Gabrielle Clarke and Anna Parlevliet took to heart the environmental message of the Papal encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, care of our common home. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, writes:

*Creatures are not just resources, but have value in and of themselves and give glory to God.*

*It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves.*

*Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever.*

*The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right. (33)*

Srs Mary Gabrielle purchased a Bokashi composting bin shown, followed the accompanying easy instructions and each day added their food scraps.

The result? Drastically reduced garbage because it turns food waste into liquid fertiliser.

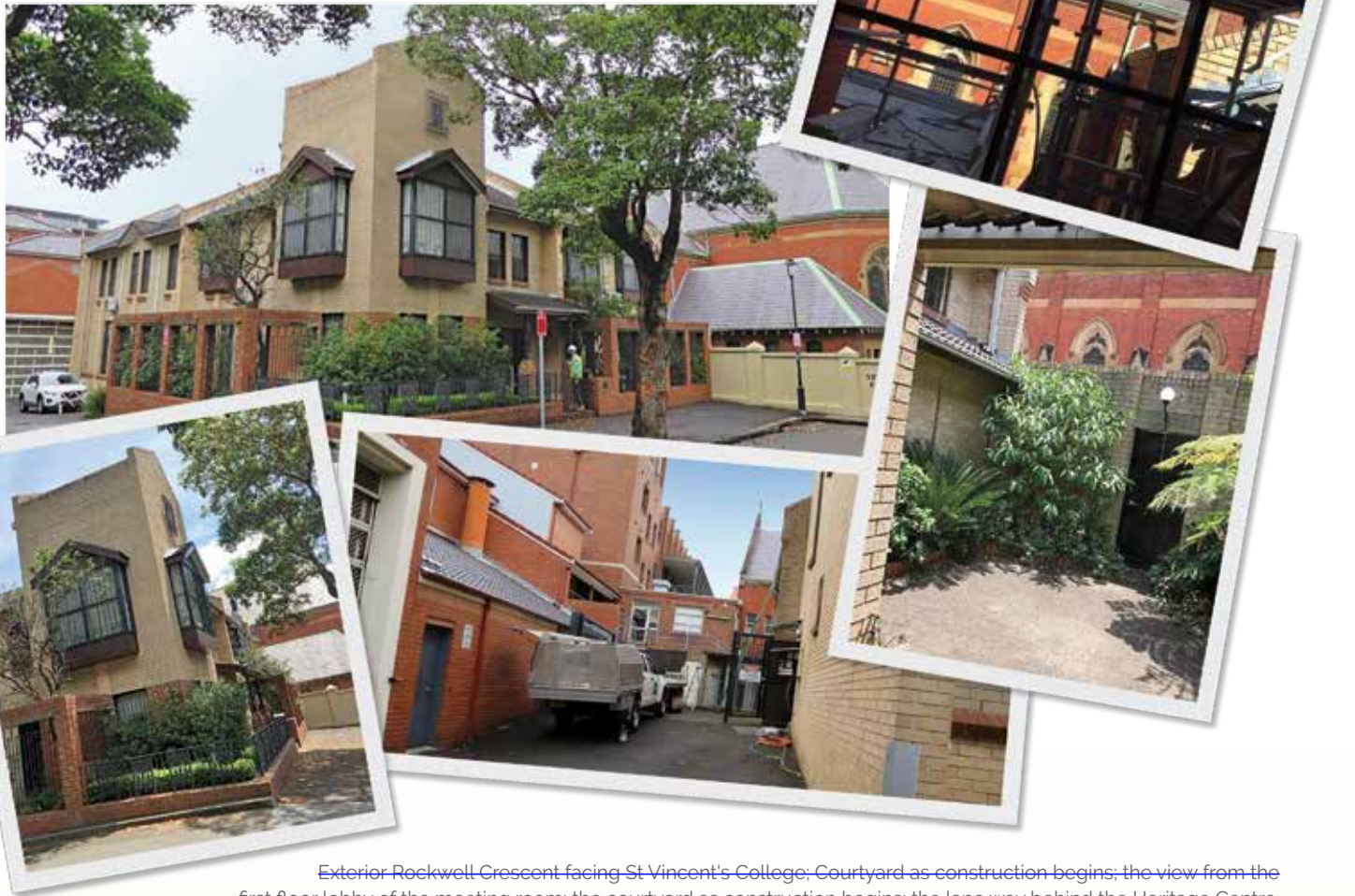


Then simply turn the tap, and collect pure garden fertiliser.

So guess what Sr Virginia Mahony received as a gift for Christmas?

# Coming soon:

## The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre



Exterior Rockwell Crescent facing St Vincent's College; Courtyard as construction begins; the view from the first floor lobby of the meeting room; the courtyard as construction begins; the lane way behind the Heritage Centre,

Excitement is growing as the end of the building phase of the Sisters' Heritage Centre passes and the reality of the opening on June 6 comes closer to fruition.

The Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre will incorporate in one facility an exhibition and the Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity.

It will include an experiential display of key elements of the life and work of the Sisters of Charity in Australia.

The key objective of the Heritage Centre is to provide a welcoming and warm story-telling place which connects visitors to the history and charism of the Sisters of Charity. The Centre will exemplify their significant contribution and achievements since the arrival of the five Pioneer Sisters in Sydney in 1838.

Through a display of the history of the Congregation and the work of the Sisters, the Heritage Centre Exhibition, located on the ground floor, will seek

to inform visitors of significant aspects of the Sisters' service to the community, particularly their commitment to the service of the poor, impelled by the love of Christ. It will challenge visitors to similarly carry forth this spirit into their everyday lives.

The Centre will provide a place of hospitality, information and reflection and be a meeting place. A meeting room and contemplative spaces, including the St Vincent's Chapel and courtyard, will provide an environment not only for education and information but also for contemplation, peace and reflection.

Keep an eye out for more stories in *Walking with Us*, and also our magazine *Keep In Touch*, for the very latest on the Heritage Centre.



# Sr Patricia Walker

## at St Vincent's Private Hospital, Melbourne

As a member of the Pastoral Services Team at St Vincent's Private Hospital in Melbourne, there is not too much that Sr Patricia Walker has not encountered.

"The whole range of human emotions is in evidence, and Pastoral Care Practitioners need to be prepared for everything," she said, sitting in the Pastoral Care Offices in Fitzroy's SVPH.

After leaving school, Sr Pat completed a three year Teacher Training Course at Melbourne Teachers College. Following her graduation, she was appointed to Merlynston State School where she taught for two years.

Sr Pat surprised even herself when she discovered the possibility of a religious vocation. "My vocation came totally out of the blue. I had a religious experience which I believed at the time left me no other option than to consider religious life. The memory of that experience has been a very sustaining and comforting reassurance through out the years."

She entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate in 1961, was professed in 1963 and made her final Vows in 1968. Sr Pat recommenced her teaching ministry at St Canice's School in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay. Further appointments followed at Sacred Heart Cabramatta and Sacred Heart Diamond Creek Vic. Then, a year-long renewal at the National Pastoral Institute in Melbourne ensued: "Such an enriching and yet challenging experience," said Sr Pat.

After that, she returned to education with seven-year stints as Principal at St Vincent's at Strathmore and Stella Maris Shellharbour. "I guess in all these places there were always elements of Pastoral Care, but these became more evident when I was employed for nine very happy years as a pastoral Associate in Good Shepherd Parish at Gladstone Park, in Melbourne.

"Through my engagements with parishioners who were dealing with serious illnesses, often in resolute and courageous ways, the idea of possibly working in a hospital took root.

"However before that happened. I enjoyed another great Sabbatical in 1999 with four months renewal at Ecce Homo, Jerusalem, followed by further overseas travel.

"Refreshed and renewed, I returned to Australia to complete a CPE Course at Peter McCallum Cancer Institute in Melbourne. And so began my ministry at St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne in 2000."



Sr Patricia (first from left) with nine Sisters at Sacred Heart Convent, Cabramatta, NSW, 1970.

In the pastoral care offices, Sr Pat finds herself in the unusual position of talking about herself, and is not so comfortable with the prospect. With a certain grace though, she took herself into her ministries – most recently and across the years. She now ministers at the hospital four days a week and finds her role there incredibly rewarding.

"It's a great place to work, the culture in the hospital created over many years by great leaders is so very positive. My particular work happens on a cardiology ward and the ICU ward. Every day I encounter an extraordinary variety of people. I never imagined that patients could have such resilience, often in very trying and difficult circumstances.

"They teach me so much by their fortitude, faith and acceptance. The real challenge is to try to listen well. Henri Nouwen suggests 'that a priority task of pastoral care workers is to be aware of relating to many different patients in different ways.'

And then there are other challenges... "When problems just come flying at you! In those cases, I can rely on other members of the pastoral care team, which is so supportive.

"This is beautiful work. I would hope that I give encouragement. I hope that my faith helps me face each new day with hope, expectation, and trust."

*Note: Sr Patricia is the only Sister of Charity still working at St Vincent's Private. The Sisters of Charity established the public hospital in Fitzroy in 1893. The public hospital, which served the poor and needy of the inner city around Fitzroy, where it is still located, was originally a younger sibling of Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital (itself named after the hospital which Mary Aikenhead found in Dublin in 1834 on St. Stephen's Green). All were intended as charitable institutions which would help bolster minimal health care.*



## Sr Loretta Bani's incredible journey

There are not many instances now when an interview surprises Communications Manager, Christine Hogan. But this is one of them, she writes:

Years as a journalist, writer, and television producer have provided valuable lessons in the benefit of research. But sometimes, research is simply not possible. Given the reticence of some of the Sisters of Charity to speak publicly in the past, many of their ministries have not been recorded.

Before going to Melbourne to interview Sr Loretta, I checked [this](#) website, and then Googled her. She can be found in images [here](#), and on LinkedIn, which told me what I already knew – that she had been a nursing Sister, and was a Sister of Charity. I knew her current ministry was as a pastoral associate at St Pius X in Melbourne's Heidelberg West – but we will come to that.

It is not often that a story has the sweep of the one Sr Loretta sat down to tell during an interview at the Mononia Convent in Fitzroy. It began in her father's birthplace – Istria. During the days of Venice's maritime empire, this peninsula at the top of the Adriatic, had guarded the city and provided the limestone which built it. Post-World War II, Istria was a casualty of war, hewn from Italy and largely given over to the newly created State of Yugoslavia.

Her father went back to his country of origin, Italy, after the war, and met her mother in Treviso. Like millions of others, Loretta's family became refugees, although she had never really thought of their move in those terms.

Above right: Sr Loretta with her parents, France.

They went to Toulouse in France where Loretta and her two siblings were born. "We spent eight years there," said Loretta. "But eventually Dad was hopeful he would be able to establish himself better in Italy." When Loretta was 10, her family made another momentous move – this time to Ballarat, to where her father's sister had already emigrated.

In 1957, Loretta was not overly happy with the change of location, which had been preceded by the older generations of her Italian family teaching her all they could in terms of domestic skills. That included sewing – a talent of Loretta's which is widely admired through the Congregation to this day, and which forms the basis of another of her ongoing ministries.

"Mum wasn't happy at all – she wasn't all that well. On the ship over, the film *Outback* was showing, which didn't help. But when we arrived, she settled easily and got a job in a mill, which she loved. She made lots of friends, it was the first time she had a home, and she was really happy."

Soon, disaster struck. Loretta was 11 when her mother died, and her younger sister, Mirella, and brother, Gilbert, were sent to care homes for Catholic children in the Ballarat district. "I stayed home to cook and clean for Dad. Mirella and Gilbert came home occasionally, but not often."

Continued on page 6 →



## Sister Loretta Bani's incredible journey

From page 5

Then, her father remarried. "My teenage years were not happy; there were lots of issues with my step-mother. I was at St Alipius, but left at 15."

Influenced by her aunt's spirituality, she found her strength in her own – and that is a strength which continues to this day.

When she left school, she got a job waitressing at St Patrick's College in Ballarat. But soon Mirella was working at St John of God in Ballarat, and Sr Loretta began her own training at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital there.

Family life was still difficult so the two sisters wanted to leave Ballarat: "Home was not happy," she said.

The pair went to Melbourne, where Mirella applied for a job to train as an enrolled nurse at Caritas Christi, Kew, and: "I asked her to see if there was a job for me." There was and they ended up working together.

Loretta was 19 by this stage, and the thought of entering a religious congregation had never occurred to her. "No way! I thought," said Loretta. "There is no way!"

However, there was a way. When she was at Caritas, she began a process of discernment. Sr Leo, who was



in charge at Caritas Christi, was an inspiration. A friend entered the Congregation, and then at 21, Sr Loretta entered as well.

"The novitiate was not easy," remembered Loretta, who was an EN before she entered – that now is known as an RN2. Eventually, she was sent to St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn, where

she encountered one of the revered nursing Sisters of the Sisters of Charity – Sr Nola Riley. "I did my registered nurses training there."

After three years, 1972-1976, she went back to Caritas Christi Hospice in Melbourne. There, Sr Dorothea asked her to do a post-basic geriatric course, after which she set up a day centre for palliative and aged care.

Then, an idea was floated by a long-time supporter of Caritas Christi, Sir James Gobbo – who asked her if she could set up a day care centre for Italians. "It was a great idea, one I should really have thought of myself," said Sr Loretta. "I was really excited about that."

Thursdays were the days for the Italians, the rest of the weekdays for any clients with needs. "I loved Thursdays. People were flourishing and I could see it in their faces." After five years, Sr Loretta went to





Above, left to right: Sr Loretta with her siblings, Mirella and Gilbert; Sr Loretta makes her first Communion; Sr Loretta with elderly residents, Marycrest, Kangaroo Point, QLD, c. 1990-1992. Below: Sr Loretta taking tea, Shellharbour, NSW, 1972; Sr Loretta assisting an elderly resident at an arts and crafts class, Marycrest, Kangaroo Point, QLD, c. 1990-1992.

Marycrest in Brisbane, where at Sr Nola's request, she became supervisor. Two years on, she was in Canberra, ministering at L'Arche community – a posting she also loved.

Loretta then completed a clinical pastoral education course (CPE) and ministered for two terms at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. It was an experience which fed straight into her focus on spirituality.

After that came a sabbatical, which took her back to Toulouse, Treviso to visit the family, Ireland, and Jerusalem. When she came back from her sabbatical, she had to find a role. It was the first time since Sr Loretta was in her teens that she had to look for a ministry herself – she had been assigned to everything in between her nursing training and then. She applied at Assisi Aged Care in Rosanna, and got a nursing role in aged care. She spent 13 years there until she retired a couple of years ago.

Now, Sr Loretta is ministering as a pastoral associate at St Pius X, "doing visitations, flower arranging, a little cleaning, taking Sisters out. I also do a little sewing. And I go once a month to Days for Girls (DFG) at Camberwell to make feminine hygiene kits for girls in the developing world."

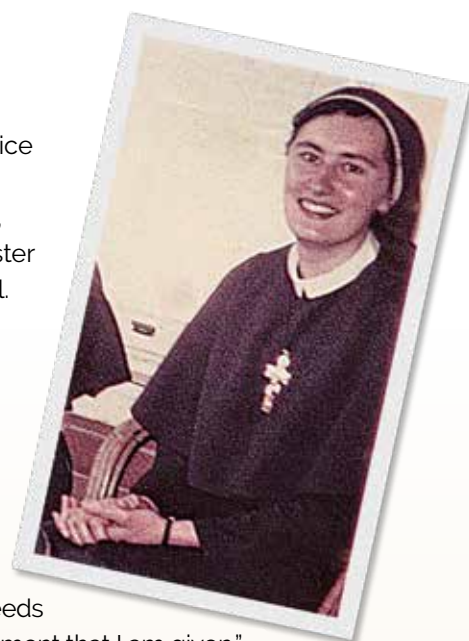
She keeps up her interest in the interior life with on line retreats and wide reading on spirituality. "I am particularly interested in new understandings of the environment – ecological spirituality – the connection to everything, and our one-ness with everything."

She swims at least twice a week to help keep arthritis under control, and is assisting her sister Mirella who is not well.

"I try to recognise that each moment is a gift to cherish and to live it the best I can with love," Loretta said.

Even so, she feels she is not doing enough.

"But I try to do what needs to be done for the moment that I am given."



# Sr Sesarina Bau's trip to Fiji



Just before Christmas, Sr Ses made a joyful return to her home country Fiji – a very significant moment in her life. It was a time of goodbye to her family and kin and it was my joy and privilege to accompany Ses and share in the life of her family and friends in her culture, writes Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan. Here is a diary of their week in Fiji:

Ses and I were among the first at the terminal, so we booked in, then were taken to Air Fiji boarding terminal. Four hours later, we arrived at Nadi airport and whisked through customs. We got our luggage and were taken to the next flight check-in – to Savusavu – booked the luggage in and there we sat.

Out of the blue came a man dressed in police uniform and a man dressed in security uniform who introduced themselves to Ses. They were nephews, she said, and Ses was giving instructions.



.....  
*The two images I shared: The Isaiah first reading, it read "nothing is impossible with God" and the Gospel: Mary's yes to God "let it happen to me according to God's will."*

Next, some Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth arrived. They were Sr Ina and Oni, escorted by Gertrude whom we all remembered nursed at St Vincent's with us. Gertie has 34 grandchildren! They brought cakes, and sulu.

The small plane rolled in, and we were off again! One hour later we touched at Savusavu and Ses' favourite cousin, Bill, was there to greet us. Bill took us to get a sandwich and cup of tea and we started on our journey home.

The road was a few miles of bitumen, then gravel, through absolutely magnificent scenery. The cousins all along the way came out to greet Ses. She was quite overwhelmed. When we arrived, the feasting had begun: rice, stir fry, paw-paw, pineapple and avocado.

The next morning, Mother Monika, Ses' cousin, and her sister-in-law, Vosita, dropped in. Serea, Bill's sister, stayed with Marie and Bill to look after us. All day, nephews and grand-nieces came. Mud crabs turned up and were cooked, coconuts, lobsters and cakes were presented.

Ses was speaking Fijian all day about her parents, reminiscing. The family – beautiful people – can't believe how much Fijian she is speaking. She never ever spoke Fijian on her home visits before. Her family has been told by Ses what to bring. We have about six sulus and a dress each for Christmas, which is on the December 18.





Sr Ses on the verandah (far left), Serea (above left); and Sr Ses with her family (right).

Ses is up early the following morning, and saw the sunrise. After breakfast, Ses went out to the veranda and started talking to Bill. She is right back to her early days – parents, entering the convent, remembering, reliving, reminiscing.

Her family is very grateful the Congregation has brought her to Fiji, but there is an awareness that Australia and the Congregation are her home.

They say to her “we will always love you, but Australia is your home.” Lots of laughter and respect for her. Everyone is getting ready to celebrate Christmas tomorrow. Ses wants a photo tomorrow of all her nieces and nephews, I hope that’s possible. I will try to get one.

Then, it’s Christmas! This was their Christmas Day with Ses and her family in Fiji. Ses wore a lovely dress and she looked a million dollars. Christmas lunch was 1pm Fiji Island time – people (all relatives) started to come from miles away some driving more than six hours. The last count I did was 35 adults plus beautiful children.

They arrived with pork, chicken, prawns, uto breadfruit, taro roots, all wrapped in banana leaf and coconut leaf and cooked in the *lovo* (the below ground ovens). Everybody who came brought something.

The table was set, and we were all called to attention by cousin Bill; the eldest nephew did a special welcome to Ses in Fijian. Bill interpreted it for me. Ses responded in Fijian and we all had tears. No one interpreted for me, but I was really moved.



They situated the Christmas ceremony around the Last Supper. It was so moving. Her family members are very spiritual and not afraid to share. I was asked to say the grace and Blessing. A lot of laughter was heard the whole day.

The family can’t get over Ses and all her talking. This visit, she wanted the whole family to know she was there to say goodbye.

It’s very hot and sticky, rain off and on, everything is run on solar power. No sun, no hot water, no power but who cares, you just wait. Ses doesn’t wait well. Ses went to bed saying: “Clare, all my family could run Fiji and do a great job.” I agreed with her.

The fifth day of our visit dawned. Very cloudy this morning so we had to wait for the shower. Today, she wants to go to the Mission Station at Napuka. This was the school and parish she went to as a child.

Ses was upset the church was not in good repair. Bill and Marie fundraise for it and her family appears to be the community support for the whole of this area. Bill has trucks and cars and he sends them out on Sundays to bring the people to Mass.

Continued on page 10 →



# Sr Sesarina Bau's trip to Fiji

From page 9

The visit this morning has started Ses reminiscing again – romances, aunties not happy about her going out with boys, entering religious life, disobeying the bishop, fighting with Mother General, her father disowning her, always loved and supported by her mother. Ses has such a story and this is all coming back to her. She talks of Mother St Agnes, who received her into the Sisters of Charity, Srs Bernice and Sarto who supported her.

Tomorrow we have a Mass of Thanksgiving at 5pm, celebrated by Marie's cousin Fr Asaeli Raas SVD, and all the family will be back again. We have given 150 Fijian dollars to buy five buckets of ice cream and sweets for the children.

On the second last day, Ses is sad about our days in Fiji coming to an end. The state of the church at Napuka upset her very much. Ses is thinking she might come back again, but I know this is not possible.

Bill arrived home announcing that he has brought a priest, a Brother and a catechist to celebrate with us this evening. What a delight! Now to prepare the lounge room: Mats have gone down, fresh wild flowers prepared, readings chosen, children arrive to sing, table prepared, candles chosen, all is ready, sweeping done.

Nephews, nieces, cousins once again coming from far and wide, Bill has gone to get the main Celebrant. All await in anticipation. Things happen so easily here. It is discussed and agreed so everyone participates. To me this is a great preparation, for Christmas, and an Advent I will never forget.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was wonderful but saying goodbye is so hard. I stood beside Ses and we did it together. She did it in Fijian, so I don't know what she said. However, I thanked them for welcoming me into their culture and into their lives. I promised them that the Sisters of Charity of Australia would always love and care for Ses and asked them to pray for us as we will for them.

The two images I shared: The Isaiah first reading, it read "nothing is impossible with God" and the Gospel: Mary's yes to God "let it happen to me according to God's will." Both these passages were fulfilled tonight and Ses was here to say goodbye.



Sr Ses with her young family members.

The priest became very emotional and said he couldn't respond. I shared it's all about love and love is all that matters. Truly it was an amazing evening. The young people were the choir, a father and son served the Mass, the prayers of the faithful were spontaneous, Fijian and English/the dress of the people was so colourful, I was totally moved.

Thank you, God, for everything, it worked. Ses has said her goodbyes, and I have some photos and this story to prove it. My heart is full of gratitude and humility as I try to go to sleep, our last night in Fiji.

It's our final morning, and it is teeming with rain here so we are waiting for water to come on. The rain makes me wonder if we will be able to get out. We make a start: It takes three hours to Savusavu over an all gravel road. We can't miss this plane.

We shouted all the family who came to say farewell to lunch; then Ses and I went to the airport and, of course, there was more family to say goodbye. After a beautiful trip over to Nadi, we are now waiting in Qantas lounge heading for Australia. And we are counting our blessings, grateful for the providence of God.

Clare Nolan rsc  
Congregational Leader



# Congratulations to our Jubilarians!

## Platinum Jubilee of Religious Profession of Sr Colleen Bell rsc

**Motto: "I live, not now I, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)**

On Sunday, January 27, about 60 guests gathered at the parish centre of St Therese's Essendon for a joy-filled celebration of Sr Colleen Bell's Platinum Jubilee, 70 years of religious profession as a Sister of Charity. Sisters, family and friends felt privileged to be part of this thanksgiving to God for Colleen, her life, and ministry as a teacher and woman of wisdom for countless numbers of people.

Our celebration began with a simple prayer prepared and led by Sr Elizabeth Costigan rsc. Liz introduced each prayer and reading with a comment about how it captured some aspect of Colleen's life and ministry. Before Colleen's lifelong friend, Sr Marguerite Moloney, read from Galatians, Liz explained that it includes Colleen's motto.

At the conclusion of her Renewal of Vows, we all responded with the prayer: "The whole community rejoices with you Colleen and we ask God to bless you with compassion and courage as we continue our journey with God's people." The Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan, then gave Colleen her Apostolic Blessing from Pope Francis.

Following the prayer, afternoon tea was served by Liz's sister Anne and her team. It was a great opportunity to catch up with Colleen's friends and family, some of whom had travelled from interstate to share this occasion. It was also a chance to meet a whole cross-section of Colleen's and Marguerite's friends who, in a variety of ways, have "formed part of the fabric of her life."



**From top, left to right:** Sr Colleen receiving the Papal blessing from Sr Clare; Group photograph of the Glenroy community (from left): Sr Gemma Martin, Sr Maureen Delaney, Sr Colleen Bell and Sr Elizabeth Dodds (seated), 1983; Sr Colleen and Sr Margaret Beirne celebrating Sr Helga Neidhart's Silver Jubilee, 1988; Afternoon tea, Sr Colleen with her Sisters.

Colleen's nephew Geoff shared his experience of "Aunty Coll" from the time when, as a small boy, he would visit Colleen with his parents and wonder what it all meant. Over the years, he and his two brothers, Stephen and Andy, came to appreciate her gifts, her sense of fun and her love and loyalty for them as family.

In her response, Colleen shared her vision of how she approaches growing older. Her words were so moving that Sr Clare has since referred to them on at least two occasions. In summary, Colleen said that, at her age of 91, "life can be pretty scary. However, you've got to face what's scary. I say to each one of you not to be fearful of the 'scary.' If you face the 'scary,' it's not so scary at all. And I find I can do it."

Colleen is well on the way on her journey of "advancing in wisdom, age and grace before God and all people" (Luke 2:52).

Sr Margaret Beirne rsc

Continued on page 12 →

# Congratulations to our Jubilarians!

From page 11

## Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession of Srs Kathleen Doohan and Suzette Clark

### Eucharistic Celebration on Saturday, February 2 at St Ambrose Parish Church Concord West

Kathleen and I joined the Sisters of Charity on July 2, 1966 and were professed on January 23, 1969. Our journeys as Sisters of Charity has taken us in very different directions: Kathleen was called to nursing, and I to teaching.

This celebration was a lovely way to reconnect as we met and prepared our special day. Kathleen lives at Concord West and I had lived there until early 2015 and we both knew the Parish Priest, Fr Brian Egan, so the local parish church was to be the venue for the Eucharist, with afternoon tea at the parish school.

Bishop Terry Brady and I were in Grade 3 together. He is a great friend of the Sisters of Charity and was delighted to celebrate Eucharist for us on the day, joined by Fr Brian and two priests Kathleen works with, Fr Edmund Campion and Fr Brendan Purcell.

In her *Welcome*, Clare Nolan noted that:

Your mottos (Suzette) *With Christ* and (Kate) *In the Heart of my God*, chosen on your Profession Day, have guided you in your lives of service of others in the spirit of Mary Aikenhead. May these continue to guide you into your future, always impelled by the love of Christ.

February 2 is the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus and World Day for Consecrated Life.



Srs Kathleen and Suzette renew their vows.

We included these themes in our liturgy, using words of Pope Francis for some of the prayers and including the theme of his message for the World Day for Consecrated Life: Encounter and the call to life.

After Kathleen and I proclaimed our vows again, all present were invited to reaffirm their call to life:

At the end of the Eucharist, Clare presented us with the Papal Blessing.

After the Eucharistic celebration, we had a celebratory afternoon tea in the parish school hall. Our Sisters, family and friends joined us. Clare proposed the toast and Kathleen and I responded.

.....  
*We reaffirm our call to life.*  
*May we be strengthened in our commitment to the way of life we have chosen.*  
*May we be joyful bearers of the Gospel, and constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others.*  
*May we be Church, creating a space where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged.*  
*Amen*  
.....



**Suzette's Jubilee celebration in Brisbane**

On Saturday, February 9, I gathered with our sisters who live in Brisbane, Karan Varker, and a few colleagues. Lauren Dixon prepared and led the Liturgy in the Giovanni Chapel at Kangaroo Point. The Liturgy highlighted each decade of my journey as a Sister of Charity, gave me the opportunity to renew my vows and finished with each person present blessing and affirming my presence in their life.

Morning tea followed in the old convent dining room.

**Sr Suzette Clark**



From top: Srs Suzette and Kathleen with celebrants at the Eucharist Celebration, Concord West; Sr Suzette cutting a cake sent from Australia, Roma Girls' Secondary School, Lusaka, Zambia, 1984; Sr Suzette and Sr Marion Corless with boarders in the garden of the Roma Girls' Secondary School, Lusaka, Zambia, c. 1985; Sr Suzette, c. 1980; Sr Kathleen (Matron) at St Brigid's Nursing Home, Potts Point, 1991.

Left: Sr Kathleen standing outside of St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, 1971 (Courtesy of John Mulligan, Mulpic Pictorial News Service).

# We remember

## Sr Philippine Humphreys rsc

(30 August 1921 – 26 December 2018)



Sr Philippine Humphreys rsc



Sr Philippine Humphreys (back row, second from right) and the St Mary's Convent Community, Hurstville, c. 1975.

### Words of Remembrance

**Sister Philippine Humphreys died at Christmas, 2018 and was buried on January 2, 2019.**

Mary Ursula Humphreys – known to us as Sr Philippine – was born on August 30, 1921. Her parents were Florence and William; she had one older sibling – William.

When she was born, her family lived at Drummoyne but soon after moved to Darlinghurst.

She began school at Sacred Heart Darlinghurst and stayed there for her Primary School years, and finally completed her schooling at St Vincent's College, Potts Point.

Having spent all her school life at those two Sisters of Charity Schools, it is not surprising that when she began thinking of Religious Life, she chose to join the Sisters of Charity.

In 1940, she entered the Novitiate at Bethania Potts Point. However, this was during World War II, so for security reasons the Novitiate

was moved first to Mt St Mary's Katoomba, while the boarders were on holidays. When the boarders returned, the novitiate was moved to a residence called *Villers Bret* in Lurline Street, Katoomba. This was not a very spacious building so life there for the novices was not easy – they lived in very cramped conditions. The novice mistress at the time was Mother Carmela.

Sr Philippine was professed in 1942 at *Villers Bret* and her group was the first to be professed outside a religious house.

Philippine's first appointment was to Liverpool to teach the Infants. She realised very soon that she absolutely loved teaching Infants. Hence her future in teaching was mostly with the Infant classes. Once she was asked to teach Grade 6 but after one year of that she begged Mother General to allow her to go back to the Infants. Realising her love for Infant teaching, she was sent

to Melbourne to do the Infant Teaching Certificate which was a four year Course.

During the rest of her teaching career, Philippine taught at Brighton Le Sands; Edgecliff; Lewisham; Paddington; Katoomba; and St Vincent's at Ashfield; and in Melbourne, both at Clifton Hill and Carlton.

Philippine loved music and had a talent for singing. So she taught singing at just about every school she was assigned to.

Later in life, when she felt teaching was beyond her, she was asked to do Parish work at Concord West. She loved being there and found that work very fulfilling.

Finally, Philippine was asked to live at St Joseph's Village here at Auburn, and to teach craft to the children at St John's School. I'm not sure how many years she taught the craft at the school, but she then continued to live at the Village for 27 years.



Each year Philippine put on wonderful craft stalls – the proceeds of which went to the Village. She herself would have made hundreds of beautiful shawls, scarves, crocheted hand towels, sets of tea towels as well as lovely soap and lavender bags.

She always thought St Joseph's Village – St Vincent's Care Services as it is now known – to be a wonderful place and very dear to the heart of Mary Aikenhead.

As well, Philippine has been a woman of constant prayer. She didn't ever want to miss Mass and had a great love for the Rosary. I wouldn't know how many Rosaries she said during the day and night. She loved her Congregational crucifix and wore it every day. She prayed constantly for the Congregation and for each Sister of Charity.

Philippine had a very keen mind and loved doing word puzzles. She belonged to a group of residents at the Village who did the word puzzle in *The Sydney Morning Herald* every day. If she was not

present with them for some reason, they would send a message to her to come as soon as she could as they were stuck.

Philippine loved her family dearly. As well as her brother William and his wife Joan (both now deceased) she had five nieces – Anne, Mary, and Trish, and Therese and Carmel who sadly have also died.

Her nephews are Paul and John. She loved their visits and would tell me about them after each visit. She also has 25 grand nieces and nephews and 22 great grand nieces and nephews.

Philippine will be greatly missed by her family; by all our Sisters and by everyone in the Village, especially the nurses and carers and on behalf of the Sisters of Charity, I would like to thank all nurses and carers who cared for Philippine with such love and devotion. We are truly grateful.

Thank you, Philippine. May you rest in peace and delight in looking upon the face of your beloved Lord forever.

Sr Jean Montgomery rsc

## A strange encounter: Sr Philippine and the Queen of Woolloomooloo

*The full Remembrance of Sr Philippine is at left. But this small sliver of her long life, written by her niece, Anne Keane, gives another insight into the woman she was.*

Ursula Humphreys, known in her professed life as Sr Philippine, was born in 1921 amid the Great Depression when times were tough.

Her mum, Florence Maude, a single mum, was a seamstress who worked long hours and into the night under gaslight. Ursula at age 10 would help her mum hem garments. No wonder she was so gifted with craft.

Ursula's spiritual life was fostered early in life. Her grandmother would say things like, "When you see a feather pick it up, kiss it, and say, 'I love you too God!'"

Ursula went to primary school at Sacred Heart, Darlinghurst and at that time there were many colourful people living in the area, including Kate Leigh, a Sydney underworld figure who rose to prominence as an illegal trader of alcohol and cocaine dealer from her home in Surry Hills. One day, Kate found Ursula's lost King Charles Spaniel, Daney.

Kate painted Daney to make him look expensive and sold him to her criminal rival, Tilly Devine. When the paint washed out, Tilly was not happy. A neighbour told Ursula who had Daney, so the little six-year-old knocked on Kate's door and said, "You've got my dog!" She got Daney back – and sixpence. This story is in the series of *The Razor Gang*.

Continued on page 16 →



Sr Philippine Humphreys receiving a Papal Blessing from Sr Annette Cunliffe (Congregational Leader) on the occasion of her 70th Jubilee, St Joseph's Village, Auburn, 27 August 2012.

# We remember

Sr Philippine Humphreys rsc

## A strange encounter: Sr Philippine and the Queen of Woollloomooloo

From page 15

Ursula said that these two women – Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine – were very generous to Saint Vincent's Hospital and the money they gave went to the poor for doctor's scripts.

Again when Ursula was six, she remembered how her mum was kind to an aging bush ranger, Jack Bradshaw, after he finished his 20 year prison sentence. Jack had no family so Florence would have him in for meals and she would bathe his legs where the chains had been. These acts probably set the scene for a life of wanting to serve God and the poor.

Jack taught Ursula to sing *Whisky in the jar*. Monsignor O'Horan would get her to sing it to his Irish friends at lunch time at school. When Sister Rosalie overheard her singing she told Ursula that next time she was to sing 'Biscuits in a Jar.' Monsignor knew what happened and roared with laughter.

During their childhood Ursula and Bill would wash up in the evening. Bill said he would only wash up because Ursula took too long as she always sang. She loved singing and was very talented.



Tilly Devine c. 1925.

Ursula wanted to be a nun and could not wait until she was able to enter the convent (where she was known as Sr Philippine). This was her wish from a young age. She loved teaching and when we visited her as little children she would always have unusual educational toys. We loved going into her classroom to play and it was considered a treat. She always had the daintiest afternoon tea and we were under strict instructions to only have one cake. There were eight of us so we would have devoured the tasty treats in no time without Mum's restrictions.

When Sr Philippine was teaching in the hall at Darlinghurst, a man ran in and pleaded, "Sister, hide me!"

She hid him in the broom cupboard and told the children to look at her.

Other men followed quickly and asked his whereabouts. She said, "Stop it, you are upsetting the children!" Those men ran down Victoria Street so she sent the first man down Darlinghurst Road. He thanked her and threw her 10 shillings.

Aunty Ursula was a great inspiration to all her family. She was a quiet achiever, never making a fuss. Her most wonderful gift to us was her unwavering devotion to God, her faith and her community of the Sisters of Charity. She was humble, unpretentious and kind.

Anne Keane



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