



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Keep in Touch

KIT
MAGAZINE

JUNE 2022 • VOLUME 22 • NO. 02

Inside this month

Inside this month, the focus remains on the Congregation creating a new normal following the COVID-19 outbreaks.

As well as the virtual pilgrimage to Tasmania, there is also a virtual pilgrimage to Ireland and the locations important to the life and mission of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the Religious Sisters of Ireland.

We begin the delayed centenary celebrations of St Vincent's Private Hospital, Toowoomba, and look at the newly reopened Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre.

And finally, Words of Remembrance for a "gracious, gentle" Sister of Charity, Patricia O'Loughlin RSC.

Welcome

Welcome to *Keep in Touch* for June, a time when so many, still suffering from floods and the COVID-19 pandemic, are facing a very cold winter.

In this edition of *KIT*, the Sisters of Charity of Australia are delighted to introduce their new video, a virtual pilgrimage to the most important sites of the Sisters' missions in Tasmania.

Three Sisters – Mother M. John Cahill, Sr M. De Sales O'Brien, and Sr M. Xavier Williams – took the barque *Louisa* in 1847 and sailed toward the colony of Hobart. The Sisters arrived ashore on June 24, and immediately started caring for the women at the Cascades Female Factory, and eventually setting up schools, orphanages, and hospitals across the island.



The virtual tour looks at the places which are key to understanding the Sisters' lives and contributions to colonial Tasmania and up to the present day.

COVID delayed the centenary commemoration of the establishment of St Vincent's Private Hospital on the Darling Downs. In this edition, we take up the first of the celebrations.

As well, the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre has reopened to the public. Not only were there safety considerations brought on by the corona virus, but special remediation work to the air-conditioning was undertaken to ensure the on-going condition of the precious documents and objects housed within.

Above, right: Mary Aikenhead

- The Editor

A Virtual Pilgrimage to Tasmania

- Sr Suzette Clark

May we all make our journeys and changes so as to render them so many steps towards the right road for the Eternal Kingdom.

Mary Aikenhead

Sr Suzette Clark writes: In the words of Sr Laureen Dixon, our Congregational Leader, in her introduction to the Virtual Pilgrimage –

Just 9 years after their arrival in Sydney in 1838, the Sisters were faced with the most difficult choice: To remain true to their charism and follow the Ignatian principles prescribed by Mary Aikenhead or conform with the Archbishop's preference to follow the Benedictine Rule...

Three courageous Sisters – de Sales O'Brien, John Cahill, and Xavier Williams chose to follow their charism and responding to an invitation from the Archbishop of Hobart, sailed to Hobart on the *Louisa*. They arrived and disembarked on Sunday, 22 June 1847.

So, our own recent journey began in Hobart...

Once again, three Sisters of Charity travelled to Hobart – but this time by plane: Sisters Margaret Guy, Maria Wheeler and Suzette Clark. This time they met up with a Sister already resident in Tasmania, Sr Anne Turner, and our producer/director, Bruce Stephens.

Pilgrimage is an invitation to explore the significance of place and of journey. We were journeying to the sacred spaces of our Sisters' heritage and history. We hoped to provide an opportunity for participants to be virtually present



With Archbishop Emeritus Adrian Doyle, Sr Maria Wheeler, Sr Anne Turner, Sr Margaret Guy, and Sr Suzette Clark at the Sisters of Charity grave at the Cornelian Bay cemetery

at these places, to connect with the first three Sisters, to develop an understanding of the history and significance of the journey, and to recognise how the works of these early Sisters grew into our ministries today.

Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey. Our pilgrimage draws its spirituality from the faith and vision of Mary Aikenhead. Mary's call and response were transplanted, nurtured, and adapted to a new country and culture.

For three days, we followed in the footsteps of the first three pioneer Sisters.

We paused where they landed in a rowing boat at Hobart Wharf. While dockside, we moved to the Footsteps towards Freedom sculptures which honour the convict

women who were transported to Hobart and the horrific experience of being separated from their children as soon as they arrived.

We retraced the Sisters' first land journey from the wharf up to St Joseph's Church, where the Congregation had waited to celebrate Sunday Mass with them. On this site, was what had been their convent and St Joseph's School. Across the road was St Joseph's Orphanage.

During our pilgrimage, we travelled in the luxury of a car to the sacred spaces where Sisters of Charity ministered from 1847 and to which they walked through mud and snow: The Female Factory, the Ragged School, Hobart Town Jail, The Queen's Asylum, and St Francis Xavier School South Hobart.



Some Sisters who ministered in Tasmania, from top left: Sr Pauline Staunton; Sr Judith Christy; Sr Denise Hannebery; Sr Maureen Heffernan; Sr Anne Turner; Sr Josephine Cannell; Sr Deirdre Hickey; Sr Maureen Walters; Sr Catherine Meese

We included later places of ministry in our pilgrimage: Colleges at Sandy Bay and Kingston, what had been St Joseph's Childcare Centre at Taroona and New Norfolk, spending time at St Brigid's School and the "Asylum for Insane Paupers".

Because this is a virtual pilgrimage, we were able to include St Vincent's Private Hospital Launceston and Outreach Devonport.

We also included spirituality, parish, and prison ministries. Nine Sisters who had been in Tasmania were interviewed re their ministries and their reflections included.

We finish our pilgrimage at the graves of some of our Sisters in the Cornelian Bay Cemetery with prayer and a blessing from Archbishop Adrian Doyle.



We must, as steadily as we can, with the divine assistance, go on in the path laid out for us. Amen! Amen!

Mary Aikenhead



Please find the virtual pilgrimage to Tasmania here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXyYevSpQkw>

Please find the virtual pilgrimage to Ireland here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfVCEEX4GIQ>

The Heritage Centre re-opens after COVID lockdowns and works

- Rachel Mensforth, Heritage Centre Manager

All worthwhile endeavours require effort and patience. We closed in 2020 for the first pandemic lock-down and in the months that followed, plans and schedules were set aside or delayed as we collectively braced ourselves against the unknown.

When the staff of the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre and Archives returned to "normal" some months back, we had to complete a significant upgrade to our climate control before we could throw open our doors again to visitors.

With patience, the right expertise, and faith in the outcome, this project is almost finalised. Bookings recommenced in mid-April, but prior to this, members of the Heritage Centre staff reacquainted themselves with the business of being open for business.

During prolonged closures, the digital provided a proxy home for the Centre. We could engage with our audiences and contemplate new methods for sharing the Sisters' story and charism in a virtual space. The time to cultivate our on-line presence was a blessing and we are now better positioned to work with schools and formation leaders in other States.

From this, however, we are turning our attention to the here and now; the physical and the tangible (that is what exhibitions are all about). As we began thinking about welcoming people into the Centre, several procedures and everyday tasks were revisited and tweaked.



St Vincent's College year 7 students studying the artwork of Dr Mary Hazel Cope with Centre Manager, Rachel Mensforth, as part of the Object Discovery Tour in the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre (image courtesy of St Vincent's College)

It was a change of focus, a very welcome one. We are weeks into the renewed rhythms of working on-site again and overall, I think we have returned to our roles a little bit wiser and with a reinvigorated sense of purpose.

Since early April, we have welcomed Formation Leaders and Mission Directors from St Vincent's Health and hosted workshops for advisory councils. Most recently, we organised a tour for members of the Sisters of Charity Foundation Board and staff.

We are fortunate to have the unstinting support of Sisters, who guide our visitors around the exhibition and share a little of their own story and expertise in the process. Sr Eileen Browne has been a regular fixture since our reopening, and we expect to see the return of our other Sister volunteers in the next month.

We are mid-way through a series of bookings with the year 7s from St Vincent's College, facilitated by Sr Anne Taylor. This is a wonderful opportunity to guide the students



Above and below right: The Heritage Centre and Archives building (images by Tim Bauer for the Sisters of Charity of Australia)

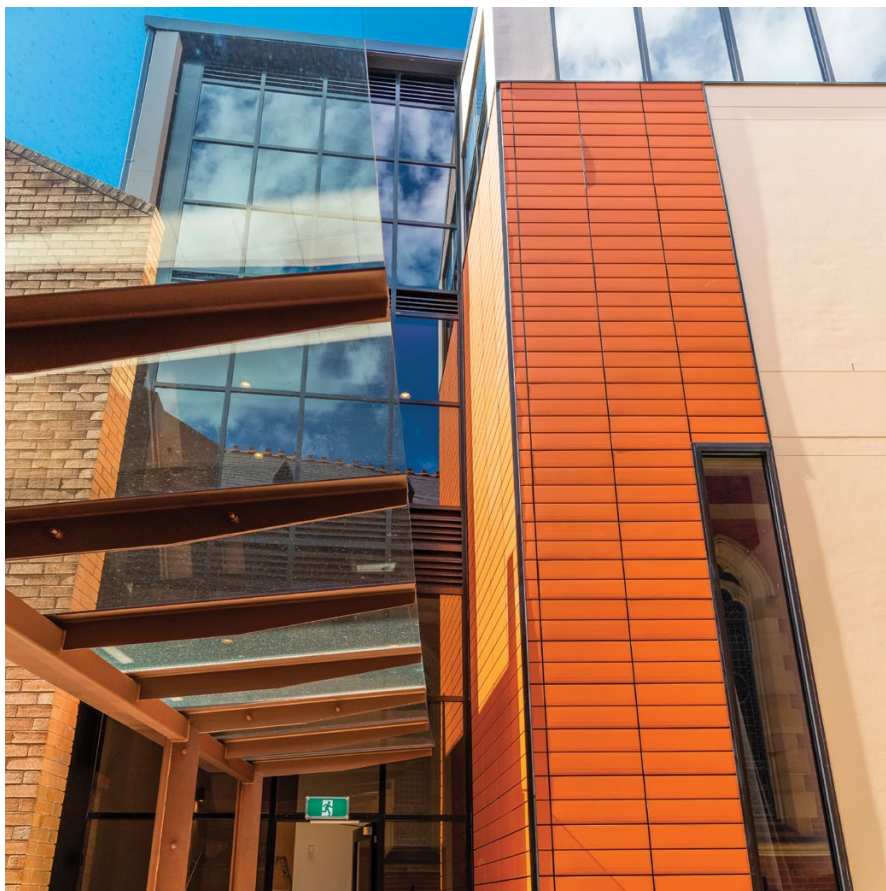
into a deeper investigation of the key themes and objects on display.

The Object Study Tour was co-created by Sr Anne Taylor and our Engagement Learning and Program Developer, Dr Allison O'Sullivan, and will be used in the upcoming visit from Bethlehem College students.



Bookings are still required, but making one is as simple as an email to <https://www.socheritagecentre.org.au/plan-your-visit> or a phone call to 02 9138 0835.

We look forward to re-introducing visitors to this wonderful space.



The foundation stories of St Vincent's Private Hospital, Toowoomba

There are two foundational stories the hospital honours as it begins its centenary celebrations. The first is the Giabal and Jarowair and Wakka Wakka peoples on whose land the hospital was built. St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba commits to working to create a better future together.

And the other story is that of this incredible group of women, the Sisters of Charity of Australia, a group of women without whom we simply wouldn't be here. I've been trying to get the Sisters of the Good Samaritan together with the Sisters of Charity for some time and I am so glad we got here 102 years later.

It is no small thing that the Qld Sisters of Charity are with us today. They have not only travelled up the mountain but I know Sr Clare Nolan actually moved a national meeting of ACRATH – Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking of Humans – so that she could celebrate with us today. So we are grateful for your commitment and support.

When Clare and I spoke about this morning tea, I sensed a need to especially honour the Sisters of Charity – but in doing this all religious men and women who have served in Toowoomba and on the Downs over the years. The work you have done has been courageous work, difficult work and work that has created a lasting legacy of community.

My counterpart in St Vincent's Private Sydney, Fr Darryl Mackie, has a very challenging phrase he often pops into conversations. "The Mission has a Hospital." By this I think he means we are all a part of something much bigger. We don't own God. In that sense, the Mission has a Church, not the other way around.

Nursing uniforms at St Vincent's Private Hospital, Toowoomba, past and present



..... 1920s 1940s 1950s & 60s

And so all of the hard work that has gone into building and maintaining this icon of healthcare in Toowoomba is part of something much bigger – to reach out and accompany those who are in need of compassion and consolation across our community.

In doing this I would love to recognise Sr Christine Henry rsc, Sr Maureen Parker rsc, Sr Colleen Noonan rsc, and many others who over the years have worked outside of the hospital walls. I would like to hope and believe that the Mission didn't leave when the Sisters of Charity left town.

In small but vital ways, we work to promote that vision of inclusion and full participation in the community. We continue to build a better relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander community.

We have conducted training of front line staff in the recognising of the signs of human trafficking. We encourage everybody to purchase ethically.

We are proud to be leading the country when it comes to new ways of reducing medical waste and landfill as part of our commitment to God's Creation. As we walked around yesterday it was great to point out the baskets that we have throughout the hospital collecting Easter gifts for families caused to flee from domestic violence.

In closing I would like to also acknowledge the tough and lonely times that come with being a Religious Woman or man in Toowoomba. I know you have felt the distance between yourselves and larger communities in the big cities. We still feel this – but like you have also learnt to use it to our advantage and sometimes fly below the radar of those in Sydney and Melbourne. We honour you for the sense of fun that you brought to our place of work.

The final aspect I honour is courage. This hospital in years gone by has sailed very close to the wind in terms of financial viability.

As you know, work stopped half through the original build when the Sisters' cheques were bouncing. Mother Mary Canice Bruton – the first Foundress of this hospital opened the doors to patients before the build was complete.

I am not suggesting we have done the same – but I have certainly witnessed that same courage with members of our exec Team over these past few years. So thank you once again for all coming and my sincere prayer is that God walks close to each and every one of you as we celebrate 100 years of caring for the people of the Downs.

- Mark Copland, Mission Executive, St Vincent's Private Hospital, Toowoomba



1990s



2020s



2020s NAIDOC Shirt





Sr Maryanne Confoy honoured by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry

The acclaimed theologian delivered the Daniel J. Harrington, SJ Lecture via webinar

Maryanne Confoy, RSC, an internationally respected scholar, and teacher in the areas of spirituality, ministry, and theology, was conferred with the STM Alumni Distinguished Service Award by Boston College's School of Theology and Ministry Dean Thomas Stegman, SJ, during an event held in online seminar format on April 7.

A Religious Sister of Charity, Professor Confoy is professor of pastoral theology at Australian Catholic University. She received a Ph.D. from Boston College in 1980 – the first person to earn a doctorate in religion and education from the University's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, which later joined with Weston Jesuit School of Theology to form the STM. She also taught in the IREPM and STM Summer Institute for a number of years.

Sr Maryanne is author of the books *Morris West: Literary Maverick*, *Morris West: A Writer & A Spirituality*, *Vatican II Revisited: Religious Life and Priesthood*; and *Welcome*,

Inclusion, Attentive Presence: The Central Role of Pastoral Care in Catholic Health & Aged Care, as well as many book chapters and journal articles. She is co-editor of *Freedom and Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology* and served as the book review editor for the journal *Pacifica* from 1996-2008.

She was a member of the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne, serving as president for three years, and was made a fellow of the Melbourne College of Divinity.

Sr Maryanne served as the director of the Kilbride Centre for Spirituality and Personal Development in Albert Park, Melbourne an ecumenical and community-based initiative, and is on the board of The Way Community refuge for homeless men and of St Vincent's Health Australia.

In 2019, she was awarded the Ignatian Companions Medal from the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus, in recognition of her "incomparable contribution to the teaching, research, and

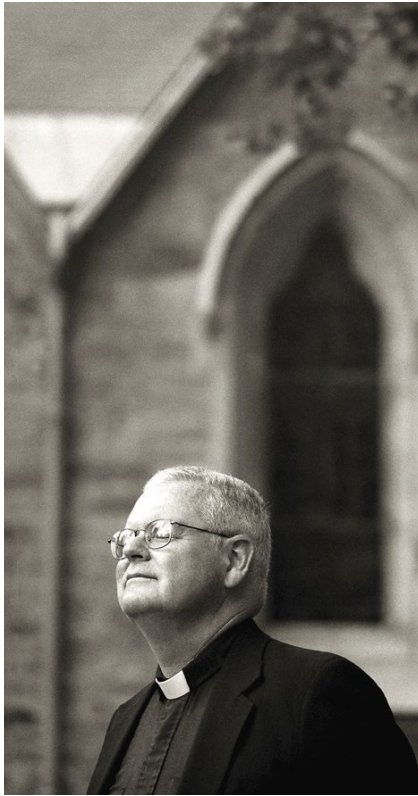
formation ministry" of the province. She also received the Boston College Alumni Association Award for Excellence in Religion in 1996.

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Sr Maryanne is the first woman to be honoured with STM's Alumni Distinguished Service Award. Previous honourees were Jesuit priests James Martin and Gregory Boyle.

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Following the award presentation, Sr Maryanne delivered the Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. Lecture, named for the celebrated New Testament scholar and beloved STM professor who died in 2014.

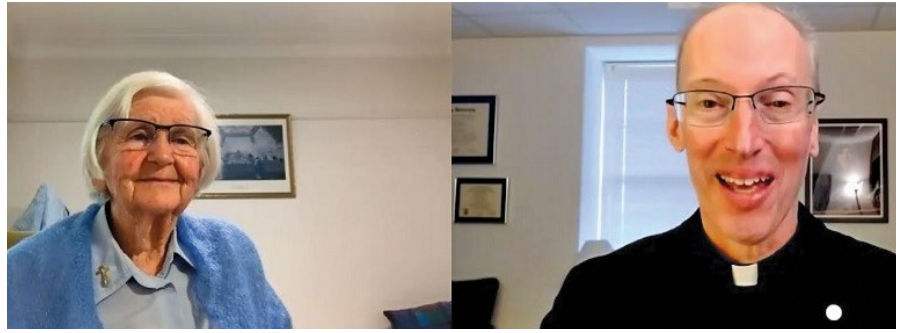


Speaking on *Spirituality for Mission: Connecting in an Era of Disconnectedness*, she drew on the writings of theologian Roger Haight in proposing a contemporary, personal, communal, and ecclesial Christian spirituality directed toward developing mission in a world characterised by the diverse experiences of disconnectedness endured during the pandemic.

She recalled the loss and despair of the disciples after Jesus's crucifixion and the isolation of Ignatius of Loyola during his convalesce to examine ways in which the contemporary believers, seekers, or searchers experience being lost and being found in times of isolation and darkness.

"Where do we find God?" she said. "Where is the resurrection, faith, hope, and love taking shape in our own years?"

She went on: "It's in the experience of being found by God in the everyday reality of our own ordinariness. Moments come through that enable us to realize there is a depth within us that we don't know how



Clockwise, from top left: Sr Maryanne (image by Tim Bauer for the Sisters of Charity of Australia); Fr Daniel J. Harriman (1940–2014) from *America Magazine*; Sr Maryanne with Boston College's STM Dean Thomas Stegman; S.J.; St Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)

to name or to claim. But there's no way we can disclaim it because it is a moment, an experience of very deep connectedness—the connectedness of the Spirit. We are found by God in all things and being found by God in every one of our diverse efforts to live and love in genuine relationships."

– Kathleen Sullivan (University Communications, April 2022)

Find Sr Maryanne's lectures here:

Daniel J. Harrington SJ Lecture and Spirituality for Mission

<https://www.sistersofcharity.org.au/what-we-do/sisters-in-ministry/sr-maryanne-confoy-honoured-by-boston-college-delivers-the-daniel-j-harrington-s-j-lecture/>



Appeal for Open Support at St Vincent's Clinic, Sydney

Initially, Open Support was established as Sisters of Charity Outreach in 1990. Outreach was commissioned to reach out with compassionate support and address the unmet needs of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Sr Mary Maguire was the Congregational Leader at the time Outreach was established, at the same time St Vincent's Clinic on the campus of St Vincent's Hospital and St Vincent's Private Hospital in Sydney's Darlinghurst was proposed. She linked the two plans and is now often remembered saying: "No Outreach, no Clinic."

Both went ahead. Reading from Outreach's annual reviews, it is possible to see that it wasn't always plain sailing for this ambitious service.

In the year 2001-2002 Outreach had its own story of trust in Divine Providence. The works of Outreach were flourishing but by June it became evident that even with efforts to avoid it, there was a budget overrun and some of the services provided became threatened. How to increase income?

Outreach is God's work and God would provide, it was decided. Trust in Divine Providence as Mary Aikenhead did!

On June 28, 2002 Outreach was notified of a cheque for \$390,000 from the Owen and Nancye Traynor Foundation. Its purpose "...to assist in your corporal works of mercy." It was on such trust and generosity as this that Outreach is built.

Sisters such as M. St Jude Doyle, Clare Nolan, and Deirdre Hickey, all ran the works of Outreach



from within St Vincent's Clinic. By 2001, there were 200 volunteers assisting the Outreach staff.

In 2015, Sisters of Charity Outreach celebrated "15 years Together," and Sr Mary Maguire, who was the Leader of the Congregation when the proposal to build the Clinic was initiated, was guest speaker.

Mary spoke openly about the struggle and pain that resulted not only in the building of the Clinic but the birth of Outreach.

Sisters St Jude Doyle, Clare Nolan, and Deirdre Hickey, who followed as Executive Directors were also present to celebrate the anniversary. St Vincent's Clinic also celebrated its 15 years with a special Thanksgiving Mass.

The Sisters of Charity of Australia subsequently devolved Outreach to Mary Aikenhead Ministries, where it was eventually renamed Open Support. Open Support continues to provide services to improve rural access to healthcare, reduce the impact of social isolation through community connection, and empowers women and children to move beyond domestic and family violence by providing accommodation, case management, and outreach support to achieve safety and independence.

But to the present day, and a present need. Open Support has recently received DA approval to construct a new DFV crisis accommodation facility, due for completion in 2023. The state-of-the-art facility will consist of eight apartments which will provide dignity and safety for an additional 110 women and children each year, facilitating independent living and aiding in their recovery from trauma. In addition to accommodation services, Open Support also provides comprehensive and specialised case management support to women and children experiencing DFV, which spans from the point of crisis and into recovery. Open Support's transitional support pathway is also available to eligible women and children who have no access to income or government support and face additional barriers to safety.

The vision for this new facility is to help meet the demand for accommodation, and structured support in a safe space, and allow the women and children across Sydney escaping violence the time required to transition toward a safe and independent life.

Open Support has received a grant to fund the safe house construction but due to the great increases in building costs since the pandemic, an extra \$500,000 is required to complete the build.

You can donate via the website:

[https://opensupport.org.au/
how-you-can-help/donate/](https://opensupport.org.au/how-you-can-help/donate/)

or speak to Development Manager Alexandra Power (apower@opensupport.org.au) to discuss how you can help.



Words of remembrance

Sr Patricia O'Loughlin rsc

December 13, 1929 – April 29, 2022

Mass of Christian burial, St Joseph's Church, Albert Street, Edgecliff on Friday, May 13, 2022 10am.

Her personal motto:

'Without you, I can do nothing'



Sr Patricia O'Loughlin rsc

We acknowledge this morning that here in Edgecliff we are on the country of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We pay our respects to the elders, past, present, and emerging. We celebrate their continuing culture, and we acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

Today, we remember and give thanks for Patricia's life in which we have all shared – as family, Congregational member, ministry colleague, friend, and those who have cared for Patricia in recent years.

On behalf of the Sisters of Charity and Patricia's family I welcome everyone – those here present and those joining us online.

We are glad that we can all share this celebration.

We are truly grateful to God for Patricia's life. A woman who was always gracious, grateful, generous, and gentle.

Her trademark smile with the twinkle in her eye as she expressed her thank you, was in itself, a gift to all with whom she came in contact.



Top: Sr Patricia O'Loughlin (2nd from L), Kingston Beach TAS 1964



Bottom: L-R Srs Ellen O'Carrigan, Virginia Wilkinson, Patricia O'Loughlin, Kingston Beach TAS 1962

Her various ministry placements include:

- 1953 St Canice's Katoomba
- 1954 St Raphael's South Hurstville
- 1956 St Joseph's Edgecliff
- 1958-1959 St Monica's Moonee Ponds
- 1960-1961 St Joseph's Hobart
- 1962-1965 St Aloysius' Kingston
- 1966-1967 St Thomas More, Brighton
- 1968-1970 St Ambrose, Concord West
- 1971-1975 St Thomas' Lewisham
- 1976-1978 Sacred Heart, Diamond Creek
- 1979-1984 Holy Trinity, Curtin
- 1985-1986 St Joseph's South Auburn
- 1987-1993 Parish, St Columbkille's, Woolloomooloo
- 1994-2015 Pastoral care: St Joseph's Village and Darlinghurst

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Words of remembrance

Sr Patricia O'Loughlin rsc

From page 11



Sr Patricia O'Loughlin (back row, right), Tasmanian Sesquicentenary, St Brigid's Convent, New Norfolk TAS 1997

Sr Patricia's love for children and teaching gave her much joy.

She was adaptable and moved from teaching and administration into pastoral work.

Her motto, *Without you, I can do nothing*, is a hallmark of the depth on her love of Jesus, her dependence of God and her trust in Divine Providence.

- Sr Laureen Dixon,
Congregational Leader

Sr Patricia's Mass of Christian burial can be streamed here:

<https://firesteel.media/rsc-online-public/>



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Keep in Touch Magazine is a quarterly newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families, friends, and supporters.

Published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

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