



# Keep in Touch

*Sisters of Charity Newsletter—Partners in Mission*

Vol.5 No.1 March 2004

## Jubilee Celebrations

We offer our congratulations to our five sisters who celebrated a significant anniversary of Religious Profession in January. **Sister Helena Parker 70 years, Sisters Brenda Jordan and Eleanor Macris 60 years and Sisters Anne Crowley and Mary Fankhauser 50 years** have in total contributed 290 years of dedicated commitment as Sisters of Charity. We thank each of them for their service to the Congregation and to the wider Church.

Father Gerard Dowling, OAM paid tribute to our **Diamond Jubilarian (70 years) Sister Helena Parker** in a recent edition of the KAIROS Catholic Journal (Vol.15 No.2, 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> February 2004). It is printed here with permission of the Editor of KAIROS

*“Amongst the many marvellous people whose lives have touched mine in very valuable ways, my focus now settles upon a lady who prepared my twin sister, Mary and me, for our first reception of Holy communion at the age of five, in 1938 at St Vincent de Paul’s parish in North Essendon (now Strathmore). So profound was the impact that she had on our lives in that formative phase that we have maintained a close relationship ever since.*

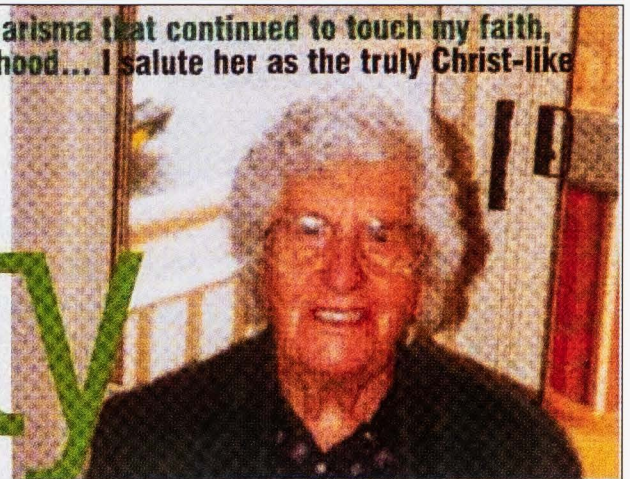
*Perhaps the fact that two of her three brothers were priests in the Lismore diocese where she was born, deepened her interest in my vocation, but I found her particularly supportive and encouraging as I prepared for my ordination to the priesthood, two decades after we first met.*

*A few weeks ago, Mary and I travelled to Sydney to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this special lady’s profession as a Sister of Charity, an order well known in this country for its exceptional contribution to education and the creation of healthcare institutions like St Vincent’s here in Melbourne.*

*The Jubilee Mass at which I, as her former pupil, had the privilege of being chief celebrant, provided all of us who had gathered there an excellent opportunity to thank God for the gift she has been to us, and to acknowledge this to her in a personal and prayerful way. However, we were not the first to recognise her special contribution to others. Several years ago she was the recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of her services to the community, especially in the Auburn area of Sydney.*

**“It was her sense of joy and her great charisma that continued to touch my faith, just as it had done years ago in my childhood... I salute her as the truly Christ-like character that she has been to me...”**

She walks in  
**beauty**



Sister Helena Parker, RSC, OAM

*During these recent celebrations I found her commitment to Jesus as rock-solid as ever, and I experienced His loving care still shining through her treatment of other people. But it was her sense of joy and her great charism that continued to touch my faith, just as it had done years ago in my childhood.*

*She is Sr Helena Parker RSM, OAM, and I salute her as a truly Christ-like character that she has been to me, to, and to those with whom she has always walked so beautifully for the seventy years of her religious profession.*

*Her faith is an example to all of how one may truly live out Jesus’ teaching to let our ‘light shine before others.’ (Matthew 5:16).”*

*Printed with permission of the editor of KAIROS 3.3.2004*

A truly moving tribute to a great Sister of Charity.

*(continued next page)*





Sister Brenda Jordan



Sister Eleanor Macris pictured with Bishop David Cremin



Sister Mary Fankhauser and Sister Anne Crowley

## Jubilee Celebrations

Sister **Brenda Jordan** marked the occasion of her **Diamond Jubilee (60 years)** with a concelebrated Mass at St John of God Church, Auburn on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January. Father Peter Dowd, a Carmelite from Yarraville, who had worked with Brenda at in the Leura/Katoomba area, was chief celebrant and homilist. Joining him at the altar were several other priest friends of Brenda, some travelling long distances to be present. Two of her former violin students, Maureen Porteus (Sheahan) at Potts Point and Elsa da Silva at Bethlehem College, helped with the music for the liturgy.

A luncheon was served in the adjoining hall for the very large number of sisters, relatives and friends who had come from near and far to celebrate with Brenda. There was lots of catching up with friends and much laughter during the afternoon. Many "Brenda stories" were recounted, starting with Father Peter in his homily recalling a trip with Brenda when she went over the roundabout rather than around it and then asking if he had felt a bump!

On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February **Sister Eleanor Macris** celebrated her **Diamond Jubilee (60 Years)** at the Parish Mass at Sacred Heart Church, Darlinghurst where she has had a long involvement in parish activities. The Church was packed for the occasion with Eleanor's family, friends, including past and present Caritas singers and their families as well as the regular Saturday evening Mass goers.

Bishop David Cremin, was chief celebrant, and was assisted at the altar by Father Brian Egan PP and several of Eleanor's priest friends. Bishop Cremin gave a thumbnail sketch of Sister's life from the young women who delighted radio listeners with her magnificent singing through to her various ministries as a Sister of Charity and thanked her for her outstanding contribution to the Church and the wider community. The Caritas singers, a choir started by Eleanor over 30 years ago, enriched the liturgy with their beautiful singing.

**K.I.T. - March 2004 .....2**

All present at the Mass were invited to adjourn to the Function Room in St Vincent's Clinic for the cutting of the cake and refreshments. Sister Eleanor's brother spoke on behalf of the family highlighting significant events in Eleanor's life. Father Brian Egan expressed his gratitude to Sister Eleanor for all she contributes to the parish, saying the celebration was the highlight of his time in the parish.

**Sister Mary Fankhauser** celebrated her Jubilee on a golden Melbourne day, on 10<sup>th</sup> January, at St Vincent's Hospital Chapel, Fitzroy, with celebrants: Most Rev Peter Connors D.D. D.C.L., Rev Fathers Pat Harney O. Carm, Campion Murray OFM, and many Sisters, family and friends from Victoria and Interstate.

All were welcomed by Sister Marie Bernadette to this joyous occasion.

The Sisters were delighted to especially welcome **Sister Anne Crowley**, her sister, Neva Finch, and her brother-in-law, Tony, to share the Jubilee Celebrations, as Mary and Anne are now the only surviving members of their batch of July 1951.

The moving liturgy highlighted God's call to Mary, to a commitment to spread His love to all. "This is my commandment to love one another as I have loved you". The music and songs reflected beautifully the acclamation of wonder and love evoked by this call, while the Prayers of Intercession flowed from awareness of those involved in this journey of fidelity to love.

Bishop Peter in his moving homily reiterated this message as he quoted "Mary's joy and commitment on this day is based on discovering how beautiful and constant has been God's love for her!" There were also humorous references - remembering his celebration of Mary's Silver Jubilee, and anticipating celebrating her next Jubilee in 25 years time! Ripples of astonishment, as people did their sums! At the final Blessing the Bishop revised these years to 10, i.e. to 2014 for her Diamond!



# Jubilee Celebrations (cont'd)

Due to Elizabeth's inability to attend, Margaret Beirne graciously presented the Papal Blessing to Mary.

Sisters along with family members, spanning three generations, and many friends gathered in an attractively decorated and spacious Brennan Hall (a well known site at SVHM) for a beautiful sit down Afternoon Tea.

The hall buzzed with laughter and liveliness as children played freely and guests intermingled easily.

Mary expressed her gratitude for the support and love given her over those 50 years, especially by her family, culminating in the day's celebration. Particular gratitude was expressed to her sister Margaret, who suffers from a debilitating illness, for the supreme sacrifice she made to be present and a warm thank you to Loretta Bani for being Margaret's carer for the afternoon.

Margaret Beirne's eloquent words, prior to the cutting of the Jubilee Cake by Mary and Anne, were enjoyed by all.

Photography was in the skilful hands of Mary Kennedy and Maria Therese Hess. A great success was the photo album: 'This is Your Life' snippets old and new of Mary's journey.

The friendly atmosphere, the simplicity and warm-heartedness, that pervaded the whole afternoon, was later commented upon by many people.

**Sister Anne Crowley** the second **Golden Jubilarian** chose not to have a formal celebration, however there have been numerous small surprise celebrations in her honour. This significant milestone will also be celebrated with her family, later in the year when they visit Bowen, in north Queensland where she was born.

## St Paul's Overseas Aid Group

Sister M Felicia and her group at 'The Stables,' continued their great work in 2003, sending 524 boxes of clothing, averaging 18.9kg, to missionary areas. Since the group started they have dispatched over six and a half thousand baby kits. They would be grateful to receive donations of any "as new" used clothing or gifts of money to help defray the postage costs.

The recipients of the parcels are most grateful. One missionary writing from Ethiopia says: "The poverty here is so terrible so any piece of clothing I give to Parents is like gold". Another writing from India says: "The books we received delighted the Children in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> standards of the village school where the poor attend. Our 'street boys' are learning steadily and there are fewer runaways now".

## Editorial

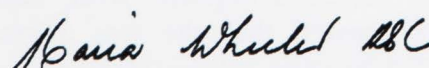
My congratulation to each of the Sisters who celebrated a jubilee in January 2004. A short account of each of their celebrations is included in this edition of KIT.

Sisters Christine Jorgensen and M. Consilio Ryan both died in December 2003. To their families and friends and to the communities at Balwyn, Liverpool, and St Joseph's Village, my prayers and sympathy. I am grateful to Chris' brother, Greg, who provided a copy of the Eulogy for Chris and to Sister Jean Marie Brennan for the Eulogy for Sister Consilio.

A special thank you to those of you who have sent in the snippets of information or accounts of celebrations. Please keep them coming, either preferably by email but by mail is fine. Any relevant photographs or cuttings from papers are much appreciated.

*May our spirits be strengthened by our Lenten prayer so that we may rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus at Easter, our hope and our joy.*

Sincerely,



Maria Wheeler RSC



# Farewell Celebrations for.....

## Sister Genevieve Campbell, rsc

from the Congregational Archives



After 30 years Sister Genevieve recently completed her Ministry at the Sisters of Charity Archives. When Genevieve took over the responsibility for the Congregational Archives in 1974 there were numerous boxes of archival material collected over the years by her predecessors and some display cabinets.

The Archives today are extremely well organised due to Sister Genevieve's knowledge and management skills. Her colleagues who have worked over several years with her have actively supported her in ensuring the Archives are well organised and set up in a very professional manner. In 1988, the bicentenary of the Sisters of Charity in Australia, Genevieve and Guillane Buckley mounted a large-scale historical display and toured each of the states where the Sisters of Charity carried out their ministries.

In addition they took displays to various venues when a facility was celebrating a significant event.

One such display in 1997 was for the celebration of the bicentenary of the arrival of the Sisters in Hobart.

Other displays included those held at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, Mt St Michael's College Ashgrove.

I congratulate Sister Genevieve on her outstanding achievements, her professionalism and generosity over these thirty years and thank her for making available to us such a wealth of information and historical materials.

## Sister Francis Xavier Purcell, rsc

from Sacred Heart Hospice



On her retirement from her ministry at Sacred Heart Hospice and the Sisters of Charity Health Service, Sister Francis Xavier was given a wonderful farewell. Her ministry at Sacred Heart Hospice began in 1994 and ended in 2004. The Celebration was held in the Francis Spaight room and many of the Sisters and Staff on Campus, the chaplain and a number of Volunteers were present.

Reverend Laurie Christie, the Chaplain, prepared a beautiful Paraliturgy to commence the Celebration. Father used as the introduction Henry Purcell's "Organ Voluntary" which was followed by special prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Father Christie thanked "Francie" (as she was called) for her spirit of generosity, her commitment and her fidelity to her ministry within the Hospice.

Ms Mary Foley, Chief Executive Director of St Vincent's & Mater Health Service, also thanked Sister for her contribution to the health service and was loud in her praise for Francis Xavier's spirit of hospitality and her enthusiasm in her work. Mr Paul Grimmond, the Executive Director of Sacred Heart Hospice, spoke of Francie's support for the staff. He outlined many of her characteristics relating to her interactions with staff, visitors and patients. Her stressed that she was a great friend and support for staff then gave several examples of the great contribution she made, emphasizing her kindness and generosity of spirit. He assured her that "she would be greatly missed because the Staff members held great love for her".

Sister Anthea Groves RSC spoke on behalf of the Sisters of Charity and outlined the profile of the various ministries in which she had worked.

Sister Anthea also presented some brief anecdotes pertaining to her ministries and thanked her for the contribution she made to the Health Service on the Darlinghurst Campus.

Many individual guests also expressed their thanks to Sister.

"Francie" was somewhat overcome with the addresses as well as the gifts she received - a magnificent bouquet of flowers, gift vouchers and a pen set and letter opener from Sister Anthea. Francie responded giving thanks to all present.

She acknowledged Sr Laureen Dixon RSC (who represented Sr Elizabeth Dodds RSC, the Congregational Leader), Father Laurie, Mary Foley, Mark Hales, Adrian Verryt, Paul Grimmond, the Medical Staff, Nurses, Departmental Heads, Volunteers and the many Sisters of Charity.

In her own words, Sister Francis Xavier RSC summarized the Celebration *"It was a great party, a very moving time, something I shall never forget"*.



# Sister Christine Jorgensen, rsc

19.1.1951 – 21.12.2003

Chris was the eldest child of Iris and the late Keith and was educated at St Thomas' in primary school and later at Sienna College.

Chris did her nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Then followed several years travelling overseas and working at St Pancreas Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London, time looking after Aboriginal children affected by leprosy at the Katherine NT Base Hospital, before returning to nurse in Melbourne, finally joining the staff at St Vincent's, Fitzroy.

Deeply moved by the work of the Sisters of Charity Chris entered the Congregation on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1978 and made her final vows in 1986.

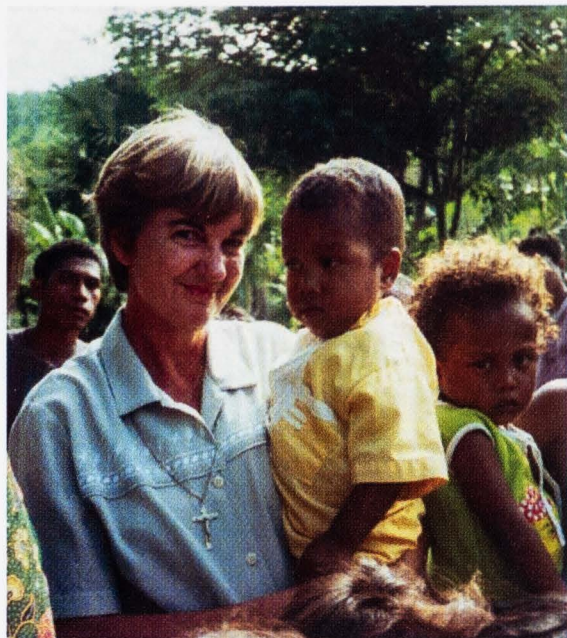
Bishop Hilton Deakin was the chief celebrant at Chris Requiem Mass at St Luke's Church Blackburn South on 24th December 2003. Her brother Greg, delivered the Eulogy on behalf of Chris' mother, sister, brothers and their extended family. The following is an extract from Greg's Eulogy.

'Chris and I worked on this eulogy together, and she wanted me to thank particular people:

Mum and family—for the years of love and treasured memories; the Sisters of Charity—for allowing her to fulfil her dreams; Bishop Hilton Deakin—for his close support and encouragement; Sr Edwarda, Helen, Chris Henry, Trish and Anita, among many others, for wonderful friendship; Sisters Mary Gabrielle and Anna, who lovingly cared for her these past months. She is so grateful for their support. She thanks them for bringing her kitten Bethsheba to hospital to see and play with her.

The book of Ecclesiastes states that life is measured not in years, but in good deeds. By that measure, Chris lived a rich, rewarding life, an extraordinary life, lived to the full. In many ways a heroic life. She always found it better to give, than to receive. She lived the words of the Peace Prayer of St Francis, her favourite prayer: "Lord make me an instrument of your peace." In her last days she took great pleasure in hearing her nieces read those words to her..

Chris embodied the motto of the Sisters of Charity, "Caritas Christi urget nos" – "The love of Christ impels us." Each Sister of Charity also has her own personal motto. Chris chose, "To know Christ is all I want," from the letter to the Philippians. Chris lived a wonderful life in the loving service of others."



Greg spoke of Chris' various ministries in the Congregation. These included nursing and nurse education at SVH Melbourne, Sacred Heart Hospice, Director of Mission at Caritas Christi and St Vincent Private Hospitals, Melbourne and Launceston.

Chris was involved as a Chaplain at the Queensland and Griffith Universities during which time she completed a Bachelor of Arts, Theology and education. She helped set up 'Rosies' a programme to help street kids on the Gold Coast. For a time she was Vocation Director for the Congregation. In 1995 she realised a dream and went to minister in El Salvador, Her time was cut short there due to visa problems. Two years later Chris became Executive Director of Caritas for Victoria in which capacity she visited many overseas mission areas, including a time in East Timor.

'Returning to Australia, she asked her order to allow her to work in East Timor permanently. She began Karidade Health, which established clinics in mountainous areas, visited the sick and dying in their homes, ran a funeral service, and set up a Hospice at Dili national Hospital. Known fondly as **Madre Chris**, she personally helped purchase the coffins and the burial for the people she so dearly loved. She also established a service to take people to their villages to be buried there in dignity amongst loved ones... Her last mission was to accompany three young mothers and their dead babies home to their villages for burial; she often cried for her babies. The day before she left East Timor, she was nursing a sick baby who was brought in, severely malnourished.... Chris loved her work in East Timor, despite the many hardships. She is profoundly grateful to the Sisters of Charity for their generous support and encouragement. For her work in East Timor, she was awarded the Australian Government Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal.

Earlier this year Chris returned to Australia with a brain tumour that sadly ended her short life. She died in peace ... Towards the end, she often repeated the first line of the prayer of St Francis, "Lord make me an instrument of your peace."

Greg spoke fondly of Chris' qualities, as a young person, she always pushed boundaries, she was daring, humble, resilient, strong-willed, generous, delightfully irreverent and lived in the present. She had an off-beat sense of humour, a wonderful smile for people. Even in her last months she managed to see the lighter side of life. Greg also thanked Chris for all the wonderful memories she left them.



# Sister M. Consilio Ryan, rsc

16.1.1902 – 25.12.2003



Sr Consilio Ryan pictured with Sr Mary Leo Jones

At the time of her death on Christmas Day Sister Consilio was the oldest member of the Congregation. Bishop David Cremin, an old friend from her Hurstville days was chief concelebrant at her Requiem in St John of God Church Auburn. Father Ron Harden PP at Hurstville and Father Ray Farrell PP Auburn joined him on the altar.

Bishop Cremin spoke of Sister's early life in Church Hill where she was born Theresa Mary Ryan on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1902, of how she

applied for a secretarial position at St Joseph's Auburn and boarded at St Joseph's as the distance to travel each day was too far, then being told by the Mother Superior should be a teacher and later that she should join the Congregation. Bishop Cremin said she did this, entering the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1923 and was professed on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1926. He traced her many teaching appointments, which were predominately in the Sydney area, teaching commercial studies, until she retired at Hurstville in 1972.

Sister Jean Marie Brennan gave a brief Eulogy at the commencement of the Liturgy. It is printed here in its entirety.

Sister Mary Consilio was the middle child of three girls born to Michael and Mary Ryan at Church Hill. The eldest daughter died in infancy and Consilio became 'big sister' to the baby, a role she cherished all her life. I knew Consilio only in her latter years; there are many of her faithful ex-students here today who knew her when

she was young. In the time I knew Consilio she grew in grace, wisdom, peace and mellowness.

But how can you really do justice to over 100 years of living and 80 years of faithful dedication to Religious Life, in a few moments?

I have just two small pictures of Consilio I would like to share with you.

The first is taken in the backyard of St Mary's Convent, Hurstville where Consilio completed her teaching career and spent the major years of her retirement. In this picture she sits on a seat with her beloved younger sister, Sister Marcian, also a Sister of Charity. It is holiday time and there is plenty of freedom to read a novel, watch television or go out, but Consilio is talking to Marcian, she is talking about the Gospels. She is sharing with her the latest insights she has gained from attending Father Michael Fallon's talks on the Gospels.

Consilio must have been in her eighties when she went each week to Father's lectures on the Gospels where she wrote down almost every word in shorthand and then rewrote notes when she came home. Retirement did not mean that Consilio had called it a day for her own education, especially in her faith. Then, of course, these insights had to be shared with her baby sister, Marcian.

The second picture I have of Consilio is also in the backyard of St. Mary's Convent. It is of Consilio tending the back garden. Consilio definitely had green fingers! Each day she would don another layer of clothing- an apron and even another light dress- to preserve her 'good clothes' and set out with shovel and hose to work in the garden. Here she worked her magic on the garden. I think it was the garden that she missed most when she came to the Village and while the area of her care contracted I think she kept her balcony in bloom almost to the end of her life. There is a verse dedicated to garden lovers that I first read at the retreat house at Douglas Park and always reminds me of Consilio.

*The kiss of the sun for pardon  
The song of the birds for mirth  
One is nearer God's heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.*

Dorothy Guaney

*Dear Consilio, you have no need of your earthly garden now. You are very near the heart of God and may you rest in peace there for ever.*

## PRIVACY NOTICE

The Sisters of Charity have a Privacy Policy detailing the handling of personal information pursuant to the Privacy Act 1988 and the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000.

Those receiving this Newsletter have their names on our database. The list is not used for any other purpose and will not be given to another organisation. If anyone would like to have his/her name removed from the list please let me know.

Sister Maria Wheeler RSC (02) 9367 1211

## Keep in Touch (K.I.T.)

Published by Sisters of Charity

Congregational Office

Level 1, 75 Grafton Street,

Bondi Junction NSW 2002

Phone: (02) 9367 1222

Fax: (02) 9367 1223

Text should be supplied on disk or send email to maria.wheeler@rscoffice.com