



Keep in Touch

Sisters of Charity Newsletter – Partners in Mission

Vol.5 No.2 June 2004

RETIREMENT — FAREWELL

Sister Maureen Walters RSC and Mr Peter Ferris AM were farewelled from the Sisters of Charity Health Services National Board on Thursday 10th June. Father Gerald Arbuckle was celebrant at a Mass of Thanksgiving in the Campus Chapel of St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. The Mass was followed by a Dinner, in their honour, at the St Vincent's Clinic Function Centre where speakers had the opportunity to acknowledge these two long serving colleagues.

The Chairman of the National Board, Mr Tony Killen spoke of his two 'humble heroes'—two people who have truly shown what it means to lead which to him make them heroes. He went on to talk of the unique contribution each of them has made not only Sisters of Charity Health but to Catholic Healthcare in Australia.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds RSC, Congregational Leader,

thanked each of them on behalf of the Sisters of Charity. She spoke of Peter's personal qualities of outstanding humility, dignity, respect and commitment and sense of justice as well as the professional expertise that he uses so generously on behalf of the Congregation. Elizabeth also thanked Peter's wife Barbara for allowing him to spend so much time with the Sisters of Charity. Maureen, Elizabeth said, is a woman of faith, vision, wisdom that has always walked the extra mile. Her service is prayerful and perceptive in manner and she always speaks with love.

Peter's son John spoke of his father's commitment and how despite a busy professional life and one devoted to community activities, he always had time for his family. He thanked his father for being such a great father and in doing so, acknowledged the role played by his mother.



Peter Ferris and wife Barbara at the Farewell



Sister Maureen Walters and Mr Peter Ferris AM

CONGRATULATIONS

We were delighted that two of our colleagues received honours in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Congratulations to Mr Phil Spry-Bailey AO, retired chairman of the Sisters of Charity Health Services, and Ms Margaret Gurry AM, director of the Sisters of Charity Foundation Limited.



Ms Margaret Gurry AM Mr Phil Spry-Bailey AO

EDITORIAL

So much in our world today centres on fear of terrorism and suffering so it is pleasing to take time to reflect on some good news stories in this edition of K.I.T.

During the past three months there have been opportunities to give grateful thanks for and recognise the contributions made by individual sisters and colleagues in the various Congregational works.

There was a challenge issued at the Sisters of Charity Education Seminar to renew and revitalise our commitment to our Catholic identity and the charism of our Foundress Mary Aikenhead. Service to the poor was well expressed and emphasised for all involved in our Colleges. The same challenge is there for each of us in our various ministries.

Peter Ferris, our esteemed colleague refers to the Sisters as 'our living treasures'. In the last six weeks we have we have sadly given a final farewell to three of those 'treasures', each one special and unique.

May each of us continue to pray for peace and for an end to our drought.

Maria Wheeler RSC

SISTERS OF CHARITY EDUCATION SEMINAR: "CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"

On the weekend 28–29 May the Directors and College Executives from the four Sisters of Charity Colleges, St Vincent's Potts Point, Mt St Michael's Ashgrove, St Columba's Essendon and Catholic Ladies College Eltham as well as the Principal from Mount Carmel College Sandy Bay, gathered in Melbourne for the Annual Conference organised by the Sisters of Charity Education Council.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds opened the Conference with a call to renew and strengthen each College's commitment to our Catholic identity and the charism of Mary Aikenhead, especially that of service to the poor. This said Elizabeth called for innovation, courage and conviction if the Colleges are to provide

faith inspired teaching and learning.

Father Frank Brennan SJ led the group in a provocative and inspiring reflection of what it means to be Catholic in the twenty-first century. Two members of the Sisters of Charity Health Services, Mr Peter Ferris AM a Director and Mr David Handley, Company Secretary, shared with the participants insights into the challenges and demands of being a Director and how the Health Boards promoted the Catholic identity and the charism of the Sisters of Charity in the health facilities.

Each of the Colleges gave a presentation highlighting an aspect of their catholicity in action.

A very rewarding and energising experience for all participants!

THE DEDICATION OF “THE FRANCIS DONOVAN CENTRE”

As part of the Bethlehem Day celebrations it was my privilege to dedicate the newly refurbished Computer Centre to the memory of Mother Francis Donovan. I recalled my school days at Bethlehem in the early 1950s explaining how there had been two Primary schools up to the end of 1952 and relating the story of their amalgamation.

At the beginning of 1953 the two schools amalgamated which resulted in most of the Sisters being moved to other Convents thus making Bethlehem a very different place when the students returned after the Christmas Holidays. Our teenage world had been turned upside down. As many people were not happy about the change, 1953 was to be a difficult year for Bethlehem but it was to prove a turning point in her history. Bethlehem was about to change.

Mother Francis was appointed Principal with instructions to lead Bethlehem into a new era. Having reassured the students that Bethlehem was still a happy place to be, Mother Francis set out on an extensive



Above: Sisters Aileen Thomas and Maureen Delaney at the dedication

building program, which was to continue into the future. As it was many years before the introduction of Government grants the Sisters had to raise the necessary money. Mother Francis was not to see the completion of the building program, as she had been in semi-retirement before her appointment she was only asked to serve one three-year term. In just three short years Mother Francis Donovan truly led Bethlehem into a new era.

Of the Sisters who were at Bethlehem during both 1952 and 1953 only Sister Claudia Doyle and Sister Colleen Bell are still living. As the theme of the day was “United by a Golden Thread” Sister Claudia Doyle and I symbolically passed on the Golden Thread to the present teachers who are to lead Bethlehem into the 21st Century.

A plaque with the following inscription was erected to commemorate the occasion.

THE FRANCIS DONOVAN CENTRE

*In memory of Mother M. Francis Jerome Donovan RSC
who led Bethlehem into a new era during the
difficult years of change.
Principal from 1930–1936 & 1953–1955.*

The RSC spirit is still alive and well at Bethlehem.

Aileen Thomas RSC

*Left: Sister Aileen and Sister Claudia Doyle
taking part in the dedication ceremony*



SISTER ANN CONWAY RSC

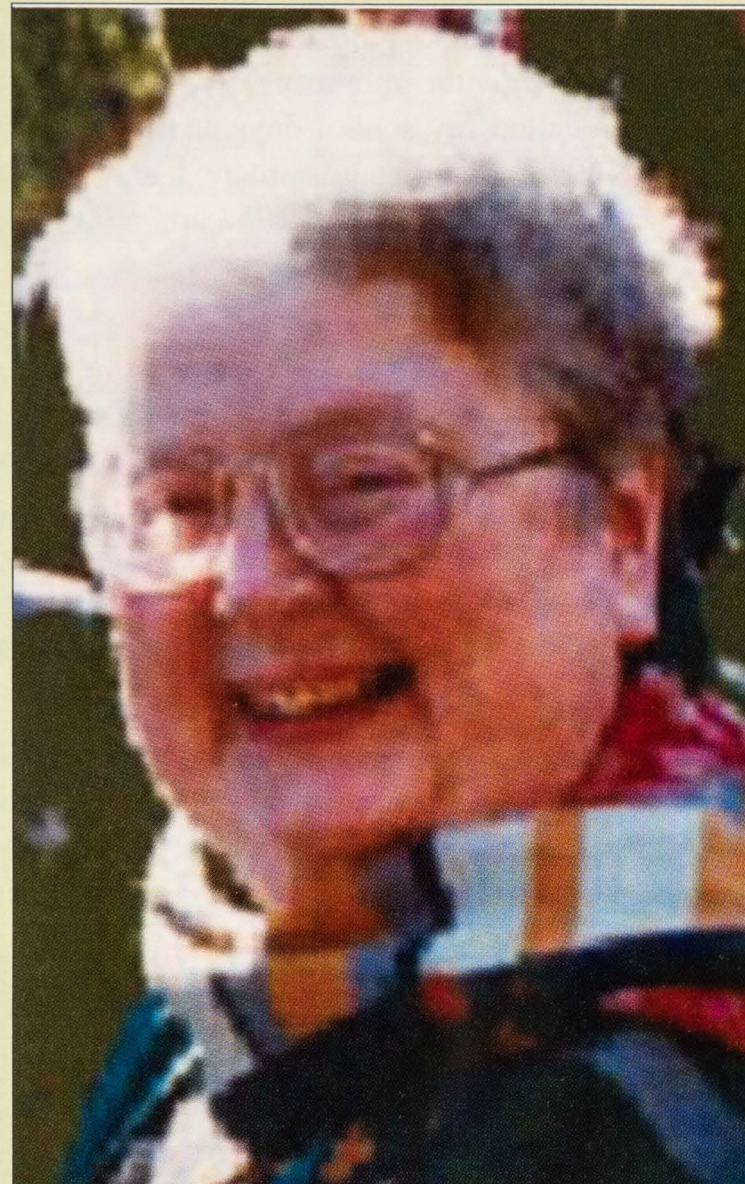
Ann died in Caritas Christi, Kew on Tuesday 4th May following an extended illness, spending her last four months firstly in St Vincent's Private Hospital before moving to Caritas in March. A large gathering of Sisters, family and friends joined Ann's Doreen community to celebrate Ann's life at a Mass of Christian Burial in Sacred Heart Church Kew on Friday 7th May. Father Mick Mulcahy, a good friend and regular visitor to the Doreen community was principal celebrant; other concelebrants were Fathers Mal Crawford, Tony Callinen, Steele Hartmann, Arnold Hereda and Rod Pitts.

Jim Olson, Ann's nephew, delivered the eulogy, extracts of which are quoted here:

'It is a good day as we gather to celebrate Ann's life because her suffering is at an end. The family was always challenged by our distance from her in recent times but she was in marvellous hands with Margaret (Dwyer), Liz (Costigan) and Sr Jan Ryan (our cousin Good Shepherd Sister), the Charity Sisters in Melbourne and the Doreen community who were with and supportive of her. We thank them wholeheartedly for their love and care especially over the past few weeks.

Ann Conway (Sister Marice in her early days) was 67 years young, born on 3rd July 1936 the third daughter of William Thomas and Doris Sarah. They lived in Leinster Street, Paddington, next door to the convent and across the road from St Francis, Paddington where Ann first went to school, then on to St Vincent's, Potts Point where she was a boarder and top notch student-placed in the State in Leaving Certificate Modern and Ancient History. Perhaps by osmosis given the geographic association, or the attraction of the charism of Mary Aikenhead, she decided to join the Sisters of Charity at 18 on 2nd February 1955 following a year working as she promised her father. She was professed in August 1957. Her entering religious life was no retreat from the world to a cloistered life but an embracing of a life of love and service very much in the world.

Ann was an excellent spender and believed in a consumer-led recovery, so Mr Costello, the treasurer, is sorry she's gone. My Dad said she had a 'champagne outlook on a beer income'. This woman had taste and stylish pizzazz. As Director of Assumption Institute her first act was an assets survey then the acquisition of better cars, firmer mattresses, softer pillows and like refurbishments and damn the cost!



Sister Ann Conway

Ann followed Clive Churchill, the little master and the Mighty Rabbits and in recent times the Sydney Swans. Dare I say it to you southerners just to argue the toss with Margaret (Dwyer) and her beloved Bombers?

She loved Melbourne, Doreen and her last ministry very much. The Sisters of Charity motto is Caritas Christi Urget Nos; The Love of Christ urges us and it urged Ann to be educator, administrator, boarding mistress, at St Mary's Katoomba-football with the boys, careers advisor, catechist, director of institute, retreat director, sister, aunt, confidante and friend. Her list of ministries attests to this and only hints at the hundreds of lives to which she has made a difference.

I believe Ann Conway was:

- Good humoured and vitally sincere.
- Interested in people.
- A feisty fighter for the proper role of women in the church.
- Competent, articulate intelligent and creative.
- Totally caring and serving (for tender care of her sister, my mother the family is eternally grateful).
- Courageous — given the diagnosis, she thought of her own mortality and faced the next step and was at peace — though she would have liked a few more years.
- To be obeyed — raised eyebrow, pursed lips & mock but revered tone — she must be obeyed.
- Real/human.

Join me please in applauding Ann Conway for a life of service so well lived.

Memorial Mass For Ann

A number of Ann's family and friends were unable to attend her Requiem in Melbourne. On Friday 4th June, Father Peter Clifford OFM, a friend of the family, celebrated a Memorial Mass for Ann at Mary Immaculate Church Waverley. Sister Laureen Dixon, Congregational Vicar, welcomed those gathered and extended to the family an apology on behalf of Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Congregational Leader who was unable to be present. Laureen gave a brief reflection on Ann's life as she had done at the Requiem in Melbourne. Extracts from Laureen's reflection are quoted here:

“Our Congregation has deep sorrow as we grieve the loss of Ann. We are called once again to place out faith and hope in Jesus who is our life and resurrection. We are comforted to know that Ann is now able to proclaim her motto: For me to live is Christ with a deep love that we gathered here still yearn for. Each of us has been inspired by the love, care, attentiveness and generosity of Margaret Dwyer, Elizabeth Costigan and Helga Neidhart members of Ann's local Doreen community”.

Laureen while offering sympathy to Ann's family and friends reminded us to give thanks to God for the countless ways in which each of us has loved Ann and been touched by her.

Ann has given to each of us so much joy and life, creativity and flair, selflessness and good humour, hope, vision, and in these latter months courage and inspiration as she bravely and uncomplainingly

walked the final steps of her earthly journey

We pray in thanksgiving that Ann's life like that of our Foundress, Mary Aikenhead will continue to inspire us to be Sisters, called to love, walking in trust, alive with hope”.

The choir from Waverley College Junior School, where Ann's sister Helen is Principal, provided magnificent singing for the Liturgy.

During the singing of the reflection hymn, “Keep the Flame Alive”, each of Ann's immediate family and Sister Maria Wheeler, representing Ann's community, were presented with a lighted candle by a Waverley College student. This was a reminder to keep the flame of Ann's life burning in their hearts.

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The following is an email received by the Congregation and referred to by Laureen at the Memorial Mass:

‘We, Sister Ann's former students of Mt St Mary's, Katoomba, wish to convey our condolences upon her entry to eternal life.

She was inspirational, influential, authoritative and great fun.

We know that her recent years have not been ideal and we wish her well in the next life. They will certainly know that she's there.

One of her most endearing qualities was the ability not to take herself too seriously

On behalf of all at the former big house in Katoomba

Ken Cullen

FOUR SISTERS INAUGURAL DINNER

An invitational flyer for this event is enclosed with your copy of *Keeping in Touch*. We would encourage as many of you as possible to support this event and to pass on the information to your friends and colleagues. The Four Foundations organising this function are all involved in assisting those most in need and promoting a more just society. In supporting the function you will be assisting in this work.

SISTER MARY RENE DUFFY



Sister Mary Rene Duffy

13th April 1908 – 6th May 2004

Sister Mary Rene was born Frances Margaret Duffy in Benalla on 13th April 1908, the only daughter and second child of John and Frances Duffy. Her father was a farmer in Yarrawonga. She entered the Sisters of Charity in January 1931 and was professed in August 1933.

Rene died on 6th May 2004 at the Austin Hospital after surgery for a fractured hip. She had been cared for at the St Vincent de Paul Nursing Home since August 2003, following a number of falls at Caritas Christi Hostel. She still enjoyed her visits back to Caritas for special celebrations.

Sister Lauren Dixon, the acting Congregational Leader during Sister Elizabeth Dodds absence in Rome, welcomed those who gathered for Rene's Requiem:

'Isn't it fitting that we — Sisters of Charity, Family, Friends, Parishioners, Ex-students and Friends, should gather here in St Vincent's Church Strathmore to farewell Rene.

Thank you, especially to you Father Dom, and your

parishioners, for making us so welcome today.

According to my maths, Rene spent more than 30 years of her life as a Sister of Charity in the service of God's people here. She was appointed to Strathmore during the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

I think it was in Cork where the Sisters of Charity first gained the title, "The Walking Nuns". I feel sure that each of us gathered for this celebration would agree that this is one daughter of Mary Aikenhead who truly and without question deserves the title, The Walking Nun!! Just to contemplate the kilometres Rene walked around these streets would be a huge mathematical challenge. Then we would need to add her more than 40 years in schools in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania and other parts of Melbourne.

Rene's qualities were outstanding, but two of her trademarks were her smile and the twinkle in her eye. I am sure that for her family these and so many of her other gifts will be missed but will live on in her spirit. We extend to you our deepest sympathy.

I feel sure that not one day of Rene's long life would have passed when her motto — Behold the handmaid of the Lord — would not have been uttered in prayer with faith, openness and abandonment to God. Her gracious responsiveness remains an example and inspiration to us,

As we know, on Thursday night, our God who is life and resurrection invited this faithful and gentle handmaid to behold and share the glory for which she has been preparing during her long and fruitful life. Let our prayer be full of praise and thanksgiving this morning and with hearts alive with hope let us say to God — Behold Lord, your handmaid Rene!'

Father Dominic de Giorgio, Parish Priest, was the main celebrant at Sister Rene's funeral Mass celebrated in St Vincent de Paul Church. Prior to the Mass, Father Dominic led the Rosary using the new Mysteries of Light and related each decade to Rene's life. Other concelebrants were Fathers Gorman, Baker, Brazier and Cleary. Sisters and Sisters' relatives, with whom Rene kept in touch, placed the Christian Symbols on the coffin at the beginning of Mass. In his homily he spoke of the Beatitudes as being the principles by which all Christians should live and how Rene's life was a true example of them being lived out in daily life in so many and varied ways.

Sister Mary Rene found she had un-tapped talents when she went to Caritas Christi Hostel in 1999, among them ceramic painting. Several of her nieces now have samples of her work.

SISTER MARY MARGARET CUMMINS



Sister Mary Margaret Cummins died on 1st May 2004 at the Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Melbourne, where she had been lovingly cared for with great respect and compassion for the last eleven months. She was the eldest of two children born to Edward and Hanora Cummins in Shepparton in 1914. Mary Margaret trained as a nurse and entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate on 2nd July 1947 taking the name Sister Lucy. She was professed in 1950.

Following the singing of the opening hymn, 'Gentle Woman', Sister Lauren Dixon, acting Congregational Leader, in Sister Elizabeth Dodd's absence in Rome, welcomed many Sisters of Charity along with staff and friends to the Mass of Christian Burial in Caritas

Christi Convent Chapel, Kew. Many of those present had known Mary Margaret since she moved to Caritas in 1991. Sister Lauren said it was appropriate that the liturgy commenced with such a hymn as today they had gathered to bid a final farewell to a truly gentle woman. One who served her God with great generosity, humility and gentleness.

Father L Leonard SJ celebrated the Mass of thanksgiving for the life of Mary Margaret.

Father Leonard in his homily made reference to Mary Margaret's motto: 'Love repaid by love alone', and how she had throughout her life of active ministry in health care lived out that motto. Mary Margaret's selfless care of others particularly the elderly and the dying at Mount Olivet, Sacred Heart Hospice and Caritas Christi Hospice, had been a great example to all with whom she came in contact.

For a number of years Mary Margaret had suffered from near blindness, a condition that she accepted without complaint. Her carers and those associated with her noted her never failing words of appreciation of all that was done for her and her sense of gratitude for the smallest gesture.

Mary Margaret's sister Ann predeceased her in October 2003. They had spent much time together, especially in recent years, and now both enjoy their eternal reward.

THE SISTER BERNICE WING

On Sunday 18th April a large crowd gathered at St Vincent's Clinic Function Room, Sydney, for the dedication and naming of a new private wing of the Xavier building in honour of Sister Bernice Elphick RSC and blessing by Bishop G. Robinson. A long list of dignitaries were present including Cardinals Cassidy and Clancy, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales, and Sir William Deane AC, former Governor General and one time Board member.

Sister Bernice has been associated with St Vincent's Darlinghurst for over 40 years. During those years she has overseen the establishment of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, the construction of the Cahill Building, the reconstruction of the St Vincent's Private Hospital and the establishment of St Vincent's Clinic in 1991.

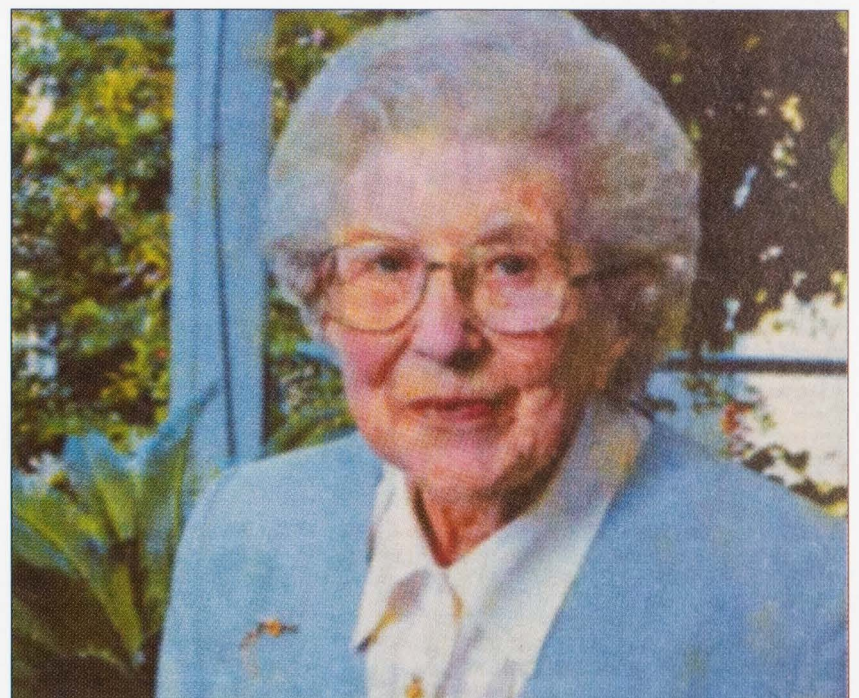


Photo: *The Sun Herald*, April 18 2004, page 26.

GOOD GRIEF UNDER SPOTLIGHT



The above heading featured in a story in *The Examiner* about Sister Colleen Jackson RSC, Director of the Sisters of Charity Outreach in Devonport, Tasmania, who recently conducted a 'Good Grief' workshop for forty-five people at Scamander on the east coast of Tasmania.

Pictured with Sister Colleen is the workshop initiator, Rowena Leitch, pilot site manager for Whose Health Is It Anyway? A project of the Commonwealth Government, in response to the community's and health professionals' need for useful information about the issues associated with grief.

The article went on to say that Colleen used the story-telling approach to assist the participants who often feel inadequate in dealing with those grieving. Asking people to talk about how they were feeling rather than using platitudes is a non-judgemental approach that opens the door for people to express their feelings.

(*The Examiner*, March 2, 2004, page 22)

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If anyone would like to have his/her name removed from the list please contact me.

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