



Keep in Touch

Sisters of Charity Newsletter – Partners in Mission

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Good news and great joy to all the world: today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord. —Luke 2: 10–11

May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened in each of us this Christmas and may we be led to a greater appreciation of what we so often take for granted.

Christ came to bring peace and joy to the world. May all hostilities and resentments be removed from our relationships so that we bring Christ's peace into our world.

May your Christmas be a time of giving and receiving. May we be conscious this Christmas of those in

need and generously share our time and resources with them.

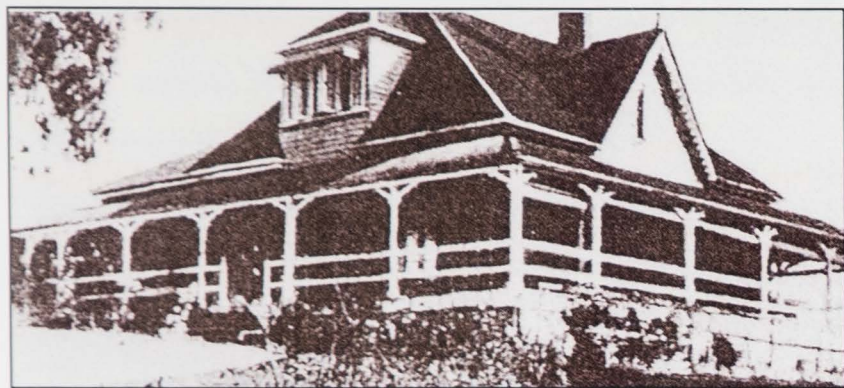
May you and your loved ones receive God's blessing for a holy, joyous and peace filled Christmas.

May the Christ Child whose love enfolds us all, protect you in the coming year and reward you for your support this year.

Maria Wheeler ABC

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BUILDING A DREAM



On October 24th the Archbishop of Brisbane, Most Rev John A Battersby DD STD, celebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving in the Mt Olivet Chapel, Kangaroo Point to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation stone by the Archbishop of Brisbane, Dr. James Duhig. The Mt St Michaels College Choir provided the music.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Congregational Leader, launched a History Booklet, *Building a Dream*, honouring the four women whose founding vision still shapes the future.

“Bishop Joseph, Sister Patricia Naughton, Father Brian Burke, Fabian Molyneux, Philip Costigan, Sisters, staff and guests.

It interests me that this ceremony concentrates on the 4 women visionaries connected with Mt Olivet.

*This booklet **Building a Dream** honours the four women whose founding vision shaped the future of Mt Olivet.*

What extraordinary women whose gifts and talents were multi-disciplinary:

- *A teacher and musician/who ministered in both teaching and hospital facilities as a Religious Sister of Charity.*
- *A medical practitioner.*
- *An artist and welfare worker.*
- *An optometrist.*

The focus of these women was identical to the sick and poor. Each had the same driving motivation as that of our founder Mary Aikenhead — “The love of Christ urges us on”.

“Just because it has not been done before does not mean that it cannot be done now. ”

Done it was!

The result is these extraordinary and wide ranging ministries under the umbrella of Mt Olivet Community Services which we have today.

I congratulate Philip Costigan and those associated with the compilation of his booklet.

Let us continue to build the future on the founding vision about which we are reminded in this booklet.

Congratulations Philip and to all associates with Mt Olivet Community Services, especially the Health Services and Religious Sisters of Charity.”

A large art work depicting the four women with Mt Olivet at the centre was then hung to mark the occasion.

The four women featured in the booklet are:

Sister Agnes Fitzgerald. A music teacher, inspired by a dream, had for many years urged the Congregation to build a hospice for the dying in Brisbane.

Dr Lilian Cooper, an English surgeon had arrived in Brisbane in 1891 and despite the prejudice of her male colleagues soon established a busy practice, specialising in the care of women and children, with an emphasis on surgery, until her retirement at the age of 86 in 1941. She too had recognised the need for a specialist facility for the dying.

Miss Mary Bedford had been a constant companion of Lilian and was determined that her work would not be forgotten. As a permanent memorial to her friend she offered the home the two women had shared at Kangaroo Point to the Sisters of Charity to establish a hospice — having first offered it to the Church of England who declined the offer.

Mother Giovanni Ackman, was asked by the then Superior General, Mother Alphonsus O’Doherty to take charge of the project in 1953. She was visionary in her planning and indefatigable in her fundraising.

Top left: The original home of Miss Bedford.

Below: Mount Olivet Campus 2004



CISTERCIANS REMEMBER THEIR DAYS AT COMELY BANK



The first Cistercian monks arrived to set up their Abbey at Tarrawaara just over 50 years ago. While awaiting the availability of their residence, the Monks lived at what was then the sisters holiday house, Comely Bank, Healesville

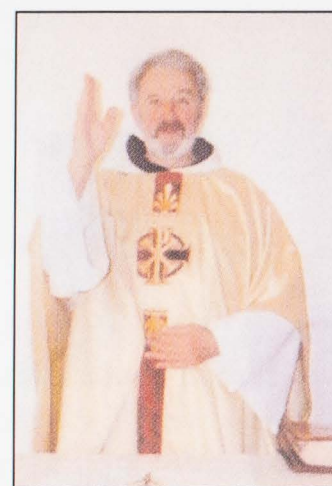
As part of their celebration the monks gathered once again at Comely Bank, (now a respite centre conducted by the Sisters of Charity for the less affluent in society)

with a large number of Melbourne based Sisters for a special Mass in the hall-the former chapel, followed by a party.

As shown in the photographs, this was a very joyous occasion.

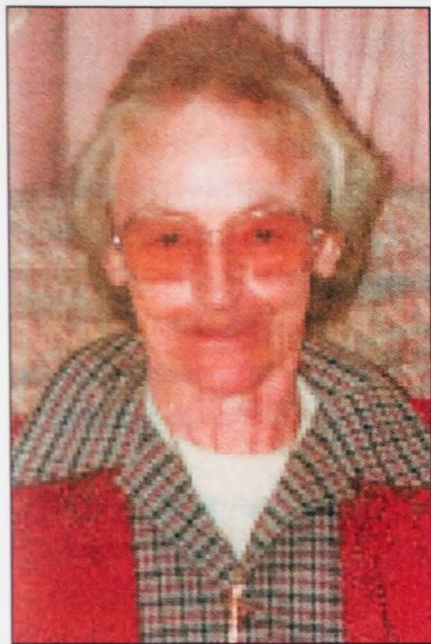
Pictured at right: Right Rev Dom David Tomlins OCSO gives the final blessing at the end of Mass.

Below: Sister Margaret Beirne proposing a toast.



SISTER MARY CLARE (LOYOLA) POLLOCK RSC

1918 – 2004



Sister Mary Clare Pollock died peacefully on 3rd October 2004 in Lewisham Nursing Home. Father Ray Farrell PP was chief concelebrant and homilist at her Requiem Mass in St John of God Church, Auburn on Thursday 7th October. Father John McMillan, Chaplain at St Joseph's Village was a concelebrant.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds, the Congregational Leader, welcomed those present to the celebration of Mary Clare's life and extended her sympathy to members of her family and to her community. Sister Francis Xavier played the organ and Sister Philippine led the singing for the Eucharistic celebration.

Sister Jan O'Grady delivered the following eulogy at the commencement of Mass:

"When choosing a motto for her religious life, Mary Clare selected *Deus solus* — God alone. This has been her guiding light and inspiration throughout her religious life.

"Born at Brushgrove on the Clarence in April 1918, Mary Clare was the third of four children, and the last of the siblings to go to God. She received her secondary education at St Mary's Cathedral School and entered the Novitiate in 1934, when she was just 16. Three years later she was teaching girls only a few years younger than herself- first at Potts Point then at Paddington. Over a span of forty-five years she taught both primary and secondary classes in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart. Mary Clare was respected as a teacher who was thoroughly prepared, just in her dealing and encouraging of her students to reach their potential. She got to know the families of her students, visiting many of them in their homes, becoming a life-long friend and

mentor. She held positions of responsibility both as a Principal and as a Superior.

"I came to know her and value her role in the school when I was appointed to my first position as principal and I was fortunate to have her on the staff. Her wisdom and experience enabled her to drop a quiet word in my ear when she thought it would be good if I gave some extra support and encouragement to a teacher who seemed to be struggling, or if it would be an idea if I spent a little more time in the staff room. She established several warm friendships among the staff, one of whom I was delighted to meet visiting her at Lewisham one Christmas. Judging by her address book, many people were blessed with her friendship and I found she was always keen to hear about any of our mutual acquaintances,

"On retiring from the classroom Mary Clare maintained her interest in education by teaching English to people in their homes. When health forced her to give this up, she spent a short time at St Joseph's Village, until her failing physical strength meant she needed full time care, and she moved to the nursing home at Lewisham. Our community at Ashfield was assigned to the role of adopting her. Despite her difficulties and her obvious discomfort caused by her struggle to breathe, she settled into Lewisham rather quickly. We often commented on the peace with which she accepted her situation. You were always welcomed with a smile and thanked for coming to visit her. Her will to live was remarkable. It was hard to understand how she was able to keep going.

"Last Sunday she quietly breathed her last.

"Today we bid farewell to a woman whose faith and love sustained her through all her serious illnesses, whose keen interest in others inspired a life of dedication to teaching and who has left her mark in the hearts of all she touched. May she have already heard the welcome from her God: Well done Mary Clare, you have served me well and faithfully. Welcome into the house of your God where you can rest from your labours."

Sister Kathleen Doohan RSC, a former pupil of Mary Clare has written the following tribute to her teacher and friend.

Sister Mary Clare Pollock — A Tribute

I have known Mary Clare for approximately 45 years, since I was a child going into high school.

One of my first memories of her was as a strict disciplinarian. Sister Joan McKenna, I think, used to say her (Mary Clare's) advice was "Don't be walking around smiling at the children". But, then it was Paddington and we were the "Paddo kids" entering the college where the sign over the portals of the entrance read "St. Patrick's Ladies College", so Mary Clare was endeavouring to turn out ladies. She had quite a task ahead of her and it was hard work, but she was up to the task and gave it her best.

She was a wonderful friend, over all these years, not only to myself personally, but also to my family. I think she was an example of what is done "outside" the school or the officially named area of ministry.

Mary Clare had a strong sense of loyalty and confidentiality. Once she accepted you as a friend, you could trust totally in her loyalty. From my experience anything that was confided in Mary Clare went no further.

Her personal courage was noted when she stood up for her convictions at whatever the cost to her own person. She did not seek the favour of people, nor please people, if she thought there was a principle involved. That discipline she brought to her pupils she also brought to her own life.

Mary Clare had a long illness and I would not deny her the pain and the struggle involved in that illness. However, I also saw this lady grow in gentleness and acceptance as she entered this particular time of her life.

It is not easy to be with a person in this place of struggle, and to acknowledge the difficulty and the mystery of the struggle. However, at this time in my life, I am very grateful for the example of those who travel ahead of me on this journey. They allow me to trust and to hope that when my time comes to make this journey myself I will be able to do so because they — other ordinary people like myself — have been able to do so.

I am sure if Mary Clare could speak to us from where she is now and comment on her own struggle she would say: *It was all so worth it.*

TRIBUTE TO SISTER MARY RENE DUFFY RSC

*The following poem was recently written by
Sister Rene's grand niece, Katelyn Fabri,
as a tribute to her.*

AUNTY NANCE

Aunty Nance died this year.

I never knew someone who had died before.
After her second fall, we knew her death was near.
A teacher by trade, a nun by choice.

Aunty Nance was a teacher,
She taught for many years,
She loved those children; it was the work of the Lord.
Her heart and hands were meant for God.

Aunty Nance was a Sister of Charity.
A convent was her home,
She visited the "oldies", though she was one herself.
Her age, it did not stop her.

Aunty Nance was my friend,
She'd ask about me, "the little one";
Selfless and interested, she'd remember me,
And would reminisce about the others.

Aunty Nance was ninety six,
The view from her hospital room she couldn't see
Not one complaint, nor one small sigh,
On the hospital bed she lay, as peaceful as could be.

Aunty Nance died this year.
I didn't know what to feel, whether to cry or not
But she went, in the night, venturing into higher sights,
To be with God.

Katelyn Fabri August 2004

SR BERNARDINE FENNESSY RSC

1929–2004



Margaret Theresa Fennessy was the fourth child of Michael and Ellen (O'Regan) Fennessy born on 5th September 1929 at Royal Park, Melbourne. She entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate on 2nd February 1949 and was professed in August 1951. Following her profession Bernardine taught at Liverpool and Concord West before moving back to her home State at Principal at St Vincent de Paul, Strathmore. Several more principalships followed in Melbourne, where she remained, apart from three years in Canberra as Superior. Her final ministry was back at Strathmore in the school library.

A large number of Bernardine's family and her friends from her school days, Assumption Institute, teachers from Strathmore, joined the Sisters of Charity for her Vigil at Strathmore at which many humorous stories were recounted and moving tributes were paid to her. One sister summed up Bernardine as 'a real community person thoughtful, generous, unobtrusive, loyal, a worrier with a wicked sense of humour. "A real Sister of Charity" '.

On behalf of the Congregation, Sister Margaret Beirne, Congregational Councillor welcomed, to the Eucharistic celebration of Bernardine's life on Thursday 14th October, and extended our warmest sympathy to Bernardine's sister, Mary, her brothers Bernard and Paul and his family, and the Moonee Ponds community to which Bernardine belonged.

Father Campion Murray OFM, a good friend of Bernardine's who had travelled from interstate to be present at her final farewell, then shared his own reflections

The principal celebrant at the Requiem was Father Peter Kenny EV. Concelebrants were Fathers Murray, Dominic DeGiorgio, Frank Larsen and Anthony Doran who delivered the homily. The readings and hymns were those chosen by Bernardine for her Golden Jubilee. Family members and members of the Moonee Ponds community participated in the liturgy. Community members and friends wheeled the coffin from the Church.

The following is an extract from father Doran's homily:

"While we might gather in sadness as we come this day to bury Sr Bernardine Fennessy, we gather confident in our knowledge of the power of the love of Christ.

"It was Christ who loved Margaret Fennessy into life and made her his daughter in Baptism. Was it at school at St Ambrose's in Brunswick or perhaps sitting at a desk at CLC in East Melbourne, where Margaret first heard the words 'The love of Christ compels us...' But it was the gentle call of Christ, the Beloved — which we heard in today's First Reading: Come then, my love — that drew young Margaret Fennessy to join the Sisters of Charity in 1949. And indeed, these words would become the key to understanding her whole life.

"And this was the love which Bernardine lived faithfully and generously and graciously for over fifty years as a Sister of Charity. And to live such a life of such faithfulness and generosity and graciousness comes only from a deep and certain and strong faith in God. The sort of faith that Jesus is talking about in our Gospel Reading today. As we heard, Jesus is urging those who listen to him to have faith in the providence of God. That when we place our faith and trust in Him, there is no need to worry. For if God protects and cares for the birds of the air — so dear to Bernardine — how much more will He do for us? For if the love of Christ compels us, it must certainly also sustain us and protect us and watch over us.

OBITUARIES



Sisters Una McAllister, Bernardine Fennessy, Dorothy Maher, Eileen Thynne (seated).

“As we gathered last night to keep vigil, we heard so many stories of Bernardine’s life. How the love of Christ inspired her years of dedication to teaching and to young people. How Bernardine’s life was so filled with the love of Christ that it shone through her and into the world. How Bernardine had a great love for the beauty of God’s Creation. In all of these stories we shared, we saw a woman who took the words of Christ in today’s Gospel to heart: Set your heart on the Kingdom first, and on God’s righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well. In her long life, Bernardine built up the Kingdom of God and became a sign herself to the world of that love of Christ which conquers all.

“And the love of Christ which, conquers all things will conquer even our sadness. And there is sadness as we gather. For Bernardine’s passing seems too sudden; too quick. But, I suspect if we were to complain about this to Bernardine herself, she would smile and say to us quite simply: ‘the love of Christ compels us. When He call us home to himself, who are we to differ?’

“Dear Bernardine, your Beloved has now called you home to Himself. See now the winter is forever past; the rains are forever over and gone. And even though we are sad, we do indeed sing glad songs for you.

“For the light of Christ now surrounds you. The power of Christ protects you. You live now forever in the presence of Christ, your Beloved. And the love of Christ which, called you and compelled you here in this life, now enfolds you in eternal life.”



Three Sisters of Charity have died since the September edition of *Keeping In Touch* — Sister Mary Clare Pollock and Sister Bernardine Fennessy, who died in October, and Sister Mary Agnes Skewes RSC (pictured right), who died in Lewisham Nursing Home this morning, Wednesday 8th December 2004. A Requiem mass will be held in St Vincent’s College Chapel on Friday 10th December.

Sister Mary Agnes was Congregational Leader of the Congregation for 18 years from 1955.

A full account of Sister’s long life and the Requiem will appear in the next edition of *K.I.T.*

SISTERS OF CHARITY HEALTH SERVICE



Congregational Office. Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Congregational Leader and Mr Tony Killen, Chairman of SCHS will mission Deborah to this role.

In addition to the Mission candle-a sign of the handing on the light of our Mission and Philosophy and Mission and Ethical Standards, Code of Governance and Strategic Plan documents, Sister Elizabeth will present Deborah with a Celtic cross. This is a connection to our Irish roots given to us by Mary Aikenhead and the first five Sisters of Charity to come to Australia. The cross to be presented is etched in Connermara marble. The Celtic knots in the design on the cross show interlacing and unbroken lines, connecting the past, present and future.

Following Deborah's profession of belief in the Gospel Values on which the Health Service is based, all members of the National Board will be asked to renew their commitment to the Healing Ministry of Christ.

Special guests at the ceremony and lunch that will follow will be Deborah's parents.

On Friday 10th December the Missioning Ceremony for Ms Deborah Green, Chief Executive Officer and National Board Member of the Sisters of Charity Health Services will take place at the

KEEP IN TOUCH (K.I.T.)

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