



June 2005

Volume 6 No. 1

# Keep in Touch

A newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families and friends, and supporters of our Congregation.

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## For Your Diary:

### 6th August:

Sr Marina Ward, Sr Margaret Nabbs and Sr Deirdre Hickey will be celebrating their Golden Jubilees

### 28th August :

Sister Padua Hughes will be celebrating her Diamond Jubilee

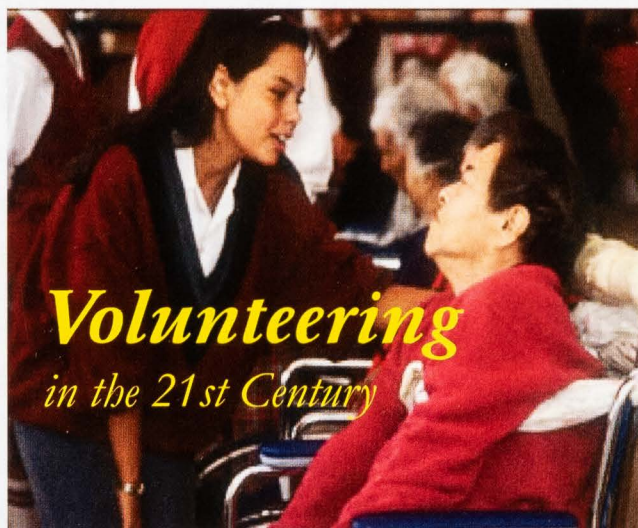


A tribute to Sister Agnes Skewes begins on page 4



Sisters Marie Haren, Margaret Laffan, Geraldine McGowan, and Denise McCarthy celebrate their Jubilees:

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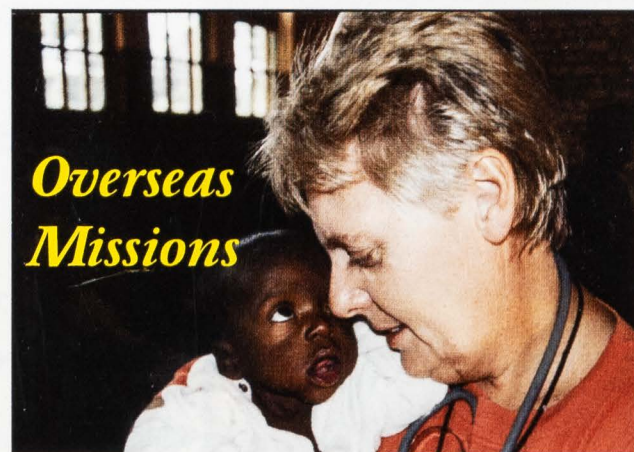


At the end of last year, two Sisters of Charity, Sisters Dorothy Bayliss and Moira O'Sullivan, returned to Australia for home leave from their missionary assignments in Nigeria and Papua New Guinea, respectively. Another Sister of Charity, Sister Mathilde Harnischfeger returned to Nigeria earlier in the year to resume her missionary work there with the Sisters of Charity of Ireland. Sisters Dorothy, Moira and Mathilde are continuing the long tradition of overseas missionary work undertaken by the Sisters of Charity of Australia.

A special feature prepared by Patricia Jacobsen, Archivist of the Congregation, starts on page 8.

The Sisters of Charity have relied and warmly welcomed the support of volunteers in our Congregational activities. Many of today's volunteers seek new ways of working together with us, reflecting the changes in our societies, particularly career paths and work hours.

Sister Margaret Fitzgerald is the Director of the Sisters of Charity Outreach, Darlinghurst, a service with over 200 volunteers. In a special interview for *Keep in Touch*, Sister Margaret shares her thoughts on the many faces of volunteers. Page 6



Sr. Leone Wittmack, rsc, a Care Australia volunteer working with refugees in Rwanda (1995).





## Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Congratulations to **Sisters Marie Haren, Geraldine McGowan, Margaret Laffan and Denise McCarthy** who celebrated 50 years of Religious Profession on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005. Also remembered at the Masses of thanksgiving was Sister Nonie Reilly RIP a member of this group.

Morning broke, bright and balmy, on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December, the day of Denise's Golden Jubilee, marking the climax of long preparation on the part of Denise and the Moonee Ponds Community. Through the co-operation of Eileen and Cate at Strathmore, the Jubilee was to take place there, commencing at 2pm. So from quite early that morning Moonee Ponds' Sisters had been turning up at Strathmore to help with the final preparations. Result: a transformed Convent chapel and two elegant front rooms prepared for afternoon tea.

Two o'clock, and with the arrival for Fr. Frank Larsen, former PP pf Strathmore and a friend of long standing, all was ready for the Eucharist. Present were Sisters Elizabeth Dodds, Maureen Delaney, Margaret Beirne, the Moonee Ponds Community and other invited sisters; and most importantly Denise's family group including "littlies", plus a number of friends and former colleagues from Denise's various ministries over time. It was truly a warming gathering of intimates.

Mass began with the hymn "Be exalted O God"; and from the opening right through the Liturgy of the Word, Homily, Renewal of Vows, Communion and Papal Blessing to the final "Jubilee Deo", all in that Chapel felt the experience of God's peace, love and joy.

**This page:** Sr Marie Bernadette Wunsch and Sr Margaret Laffan

Page 3 : (Back) Sisters Maureen Parker, Cate O'Brien, Margaret Sapsford, Patricia Scully

(Front) Sisters Kathleen Munce, Elizabeth Dodds, Margaret O'Brien

After Mass everyone streamed out of the chapel to another joyful gathering at afternoon tea. There were meetings with friends clustering around the Jubilarian, lots of laughter, conversation, sharing of memories and of course, sharing of the good things provided, including a remarkable Jubilee Cake made of profiteroles. So the afternoon drew on till the guests began with some reluctance to take their leave.

With them we say once more, Congratulations Denise. May you be blessed by God in all your years to come.

Sisters Marie Haren and Geraldine McGowan celebrated the milestone with a Mass of Thanksgiving on 6<sup>th</sup> January in the St Vincent's Chapel Potts Point, the Chapel where they were professed fifty years ago to the day. Their fellow jubilarian, Margaret Laffan was present with them for the occasion. The principal celebrant and homilist was Bishop David Cremin, a long time friend of Geraldine. The other concelebrants, Monsignor John Walsh and Fathers Gerard Kelly, Mel Cotter OFM and Peter McGrath OFM were also friends of the jubilarians.

Bishop Cremin gave a short resume of the life and ministry of each of the three jubilarians and then linked their experiences into the theme of the Epiphany which, for so long was celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January. Prior to the final prayer Sister Elizabeth asked Sister Rose Holman a close friend of Marie's to present her with the Papal Blessing and Bishop David to present Geraldine with her Papal Blessing.

During the afternoon tea that followed, Marie's brother Peter proposed a toast to the jubilarians.





## Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Sister Margaret Laffan celebrated her Golden Jubilee at St Vincent's Chapel, Melbourne. Sr Maureen Delaney welcomed Margaret's extended family, and spoke about her ministries of nursing, social work and spirituality.

Father Hugh Delaney travelled from Bathurst to be Principal Celebrant on this special occasion, while Father Pat Harvey concelebrated. Father Hugh spoke of his long association with Margaret as they pioneered the Better World Movement in Australia.

Sister Elizabeth Dodds presented Margaret with her Papal blessing. Liz said she had learned many things from Margaret, one being "to project her voice".

A special feature of this beautiful Liturgy was the feast of music led by Sister Angela Burke, with Sister Margaret Beirne and organist Margaret Boyle. Golden flowers continued in the Brennan Hall, where Margaret Beirne proposed the toast. A beautiful day of sharing!

## Celebration at Mount St Michaels



It was a grand occasion. Sisters Elizabeth Dodds, Margaret Beirne, Anne Crowley and Jan O'Grady came to join 13 other Sisters from Queensland and about 300 friends for this Celebration.

The Gathering began with Ann Morgan, Deputy Principal of the College, introducing the day, then a

welcome by Alison Terrey, Principal, which led us into the prayer prepared by Staff and Students, which was so beautifully and thoughtfully prepared.

Interwoven into the Prayer was the story of the coming of the First five Sisters, recalling on the first Sunday in the parish of St. Finbarrs, in 1925, after a great welcome to the Sisters, the Congregation sang Hail Queen of heaven, which began our Prayer time, also remembering on the day we were still celebrating the Easter Season coming to Pentecost.

The Students led us in song, with one group of students presenting a Liturgical Dance during which they lit five candles, remembering the first five Sisters and a very large candle for all the Sisters who have been and are here now.

A power point presentation followed recalling events from 1925 to 2005 while the college choir sang the College song *Fide et Amore*, accompanied by their string ensemble.

Mrs Meta Truscott a friend of the Sisters, also a member of the Ashgrove Historical Society, had prepared a talk on the Sisters of Charity, which was presented by Ms Kate Jones, also a member of the Society, which was introduced by Mr. Dick Paten the President of the Society, which is available on the College website [www.msm.qld.edu.au](http://www.msm.qld.edu.au)

Elizabeth Dodds responded and the gathering were so impressed with her words. We were challenged with "who will be the five to carry and translate the mission of the Sisters of Charity into our communities: local, nationally and globally?"

After concluding with words of thanks from Ann Morgan, the gathering moved to catching up with old friends and enjoying a cuppa.



Sister Elizabeth Dodds with Principal Alison Terrey





### *A tribute to* **SISTER AGNES (EDNA) SKEWES RSC**

Edna Skewes' birthplace was the tin-mining town of Tingha, near Inverell, northern New South Wales. Her father, Robert Northey Skewes, was part-owner and manager of one of the two big tin mines. His parents had come from Cornwall, while her mother, Sarah Agnes Connell, had come from Co Donegal, Ireland. Edna was the youngest of seven children living.

When Edna was eight her father sold the property and they moved to Sydney on the beach-front at Clovelly. Edna received her primary education from the Sisters of St Joseph, and her secondary education at St Vincent's College, Potts Point, finishing in 1926. The following year she went "across the garden" and joined the Sisters of Charity at Bethania, now the Garcia Centre at Potts Point.

At the Novitiate the newly clothed Sister Agnes received her religious formation and teacher-training. Following her Religious Profession in 1930, Sr Agnes did Junior Secondary Teaching. Two years later she began her three years' study at the University of Sydney for her Bachelor of Arts Degree.

Qualified now for teaching senior Secondary subjects, Sr Agnes was sent to Victoria, where she taught at Catholic Ladies' College, East Melbourne, and later, at St Columba's College, Essendon. Responsibility for running the Convent as Rectress was added to this teacher's workload at CLC, while at the same time she was Principal of each school. To further her Science attainments, Sister studied Physics, and then Chemistry, at the University of Melbourne.

After twelve years in Victoria Sister Agnes returned to St Vincents College in Potts Point, where she spent eight years in charge of the Leaving Certificate class, teaching English, Latin, French and Chemistry. Then in January 1955, she suddenly found herself Superior General of the Sisters of Charity, a position she held for eighteen years. This was a period of rapid change in the Church, especially following Vatican II.

Father Hugh Walsh OFM was chief celebrant at Sister Agnes' Requiem Mass held in St Vincent's Chapel, Potts Point. In his homily Father Hugh spoke warmly of Agnes' unfailing courtesy, her keen intellect and her punctuality.

### **Words of Remembrance**

*Sometimes we expect a funeral to tell us something about a Sister's life, especially when the person has been someone rather private, like Agnes. But each person is a mystery. We don't always understand ourselves. How can we understand anyone else? So the Agnes I knew will be only one aspect of a complex person. When we all present our memories, we have more of the story, but never all of it. By Sister Moira O'Sullivan*

The fifty-seven years that I knew Agnes were only part of her life. My view is that of a grateful ex-pupil who became a friend, though that friendship was suspended for eighteen years. As soon as she became superior general, Agnes said that we could no longer be friends as she had to treat every Sister the same way. What came to mind



when I heard of her death were the changes I'd experienced in her and those are what I'll concentrate on today.

When a religious has a jubilee or dies, we think of that story in Luke (17:7-10) when Jesus talks about the servant who works and expects no reward or acknowledgement. The story ends with Jesus saying: 'So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done.' So Agnes is not going to go to St Peter and say, 'I was superior general for eighteen years. You just have to give me a really good mansion.' Agnes will trust God's generosity. She did what she was ordered to do.

Last year, a couple of times that I visited, Agnes worried about all those who had died before her and how they could possibly all fit into heaven. Now she knows that neither space nor time binds God and those who are freed from this life.

Agnes will be able to tell St Peter that she did her best. That best was a good best, too. We who were lucky to be taught by her were told by Professor Mitchell that she was the best English teacher in the State. If I were more gracious, I would have told her more often what possibilities learning French and Latin from her opened for me. She managed to hold me in a chemistry class, though, for one lesson only. On the other hand, while RE lessons were a bore elsewhere, with Agnes we read a gospel and the prayers of the Mass, both absorbing studies. Even that mixture indicates that she could teach anything.

In the 40s, schoolchildren kept quiet. To ask a question often meant being told that you were insolent. When Agnes was contradicted, the corner of her mouth would twitch and then she would lead you back through your reasoning until you contradicted yourself. One SVC speech night, some of my Uni mob accompanied me back to the College, one of them announcing that he would be able to prove to my teacher that God didn't exist. He came away from his session with Agnes looking shell-shocked, though the only comment was, 'That's a really intelligent woman.'

So one image that stands out of Agnes is of the excellent teacher. At the same time, she had a tal-

ent for puncturing one's self-importance. When I called to school to collect my sister, feeling rather vain of my status as a university student, Agnes' greeting was: 'You're beginning to lose your baby-fat at last.' The deflation that gave was nothing to the fury induced when visitation at Hurstville meant an order to remake a cap because the borders were too wide. At the time I saw this as scrupulosity and a waste of time. However, it was part of Agnes' make-up that she wanted to do everything properly.

Being made superior general in unpleasant circumstances before her silver jubilee was not the easiest task. Following someone as well-loved as Mother Alphonsus is always difficult. It took amazing courage for Agnes to open the Congregation to new ideas when a powerful rearguard had prevented the Congregation from following the updating attempted by Mother Alphonsus. Agnes could have played safe. Instead, she took the Congregation out of its narrowness by participating in world-wide assemblies of superiors general. She took the risk of sending Sisters to the missions and also for training to USA and Rome. With her as superior general, the Congregation connected again with the Irish Sisters in a significant way. From the same zeal for looking at our origins, Agnes ordered that the records in Rome be searched to find what had really happened in 1847 and 1859 in Australia.

All this was possible because Agnes could listen to a viewpoint different from her own. One experience I had of this was when the Australian government helped to send me to a French teachers' course. At the time we were not allowed to swim except in certain specified places. The idea that I would be close to a beach and not able to swim was too much for me, and I asked if I could go swimming during the course. Agnes said in shock, 'But you wouldn't want to be swimming in the same place as seculars, would you?' When I firmly said, 'Yes', nothing more was said and I assumed that silence gave consent. Her realism showed in her advice when Patricia and I were sent to Rome. Agnes called me in and asked me, rather despairingly, to try to look tidy sometimes.

**Continues page 10**



## Volunteering in the 21st Century

**KIT:** Before we talk in detail about volunteering, for readers unfamiliar with Outreach at Darlinghurst, how important are volunteers to fulfilling the Mission of Outreach?

**MF:** Outreach is a volunteer-based organisation, therefore Volunteers are the backbone of Outreach. They are fundamental to its very existence and its ability to continue to respond to meeting needs within the community and, therefore, in Outreach being able to continue to live out its mission.

All volunteers are trained and have a three months probationary period before graduating.

**KIT:** There are some new, some would say exciting changes in the way volunteers are able to connect with Outreach. Tell me about some of these changes.

**MF:** 2004 was the first year we conducted an abridged volunteer training programme, as well as the usual six week VETAB accredited training programmes. The reason for this was to search out a different group - we even advertised through the universities as well as hoping to tap into those currently in the workplace, who, perhaps were interested in volunteering over short spans of time.

The response was positive. We're finding that younger people are wanting to volunteer and share some of their expertise, whether it be teaching computer skills at our Lewisham service; or other skills through joining goal planning committees, special projects or involvement in events. We also have a couple of Volunteers who are in business, who generously share their resources, time and expertise to help further our Mission.

This is somewhat different to the *traditional* style of volunteers, who perhaps initially volunteered within their children's schools or their church. Once their children grew up or they'd retired from professional roles they then volunteered their time within social welfare groups - these were the kind of Volunteers that were the basis of Outreach when it began back in 1990. Many of these original Volunteers are still with Outreach as valuable contributors within our Services.



An interview with  
Sister Margaret Fitzgerald  
Director  
Sisters of Charity Outreach,  
Darlinghurst

The difference today is that the younger volunteers commit for a certain time - months, or a year, as opposed to those when we began who had an "open-ended" time commitment. The *working volunteers* are also more interested in outcomes. They ask "What difference does my contribution make to these people?". Or they want to give something back to those in need because they have been blessed themselves.

**KIT:** What will happen to the "traditional" roles of volunteering?

**MF:** These will continue while we have people like those who are currently volunteering or in the future those who, as they retire, are willing to give of their time...and we will gratefully accept and cater for them for they are very much the foundation of Outreach and we wouldn't have the Services we do today without them. Their time and commitment in the spirit of hospitality is boundless, and they are incredibly faithful.

**KIT:** The guest speaker at the annual Volunteer Celebration spoke about trends in volunteering: What were the "take-home" messages relevant to Outreach?

**MF:** Why do our Volunteers stay when other organisations have trouble in retaining same? The message was clear - *the work that the Volunteers do at the Sisters of Charity Outreach is of enormous importance*. The speaker also stated that *this organisation realises that the volunteers are its cornerstone - and the volunteers are treated with respect*. Mission, values, hospitality, celebrating and recognising volunteers is an important part of the life of Outreach.



In looking at the trends our speaker linked us with the first five Sisters, who volunteered for the Australian Mission, and now, over 150 years later, the continuing of that Mission through Outreach. Both eras were in states of flux – in the latter there's a shift in the way governments regarded and responded to the voluntary sector. Outreach was initiated at a time when volunteers and volunteering were formally being recognised by governments for the first time, and within the context of a period of great change.

The competitive business model was placed onto voluntary sectors and it was made clear that they needed to 'professionalise', and in order to do this they had to embrace the competitive business model. The government also began to take volunteering 'seriously' in as much as formal policies were considered and written and that's why we've incorporated more structures within Outreach, for example the Strategic Planning process; VETAB accredited planning process; events to raise funds; and the planning of social occasions where we honour and acknowledge our wonderful volunteers.

**KIT:** We've talked about how Outreach provides constant examples of how Mary Aikenhead's Spirit permeates our lives: Share with me a few examples from the many activities at Outreach.

**MF:** *Continuing to go out where no one has gone before!* Hospitality and the welcoming voice of volunteers when people come into the shop, either visiting doctors themselves or family members in the Hospitals. In Country Care Link, listening respectfully to callers from the country as they share

their difficulties. When our CCL drivers meet people they often provide service over and above the basics, finding when they delivered visitors to their accommodation that they had no food and little or no money. On one occasion, our driver ended up taking the visitors to his home for a meal. Another example is a volunteer visiting a girl in hospital with an eating disorder, and reporting her progress back to her mother in the country. The hospitality provided by volunteers at Parent Support connects with all cultures and socio-economic groups. There are many truly sad cases at Safe Haven, but seeing the happiness of mothers re-claiming their independence and moving on with their lives is a positive experience shared by our volunteers and staff. Similarly, to see women from low socio-economic, often non-English speaking backgrounds gaining confidence in language through the English as a second language (ESL) courses at Lewisham Learning and Living Skills. Some of our new volunteers assist the Eastern Area Visiting Program through weekend and respite visits and outings.

For more information on NSW Outreach and Volunteering visit

[www.stvincents.com.au/nsw/outreach/](http://www.stvincents.com.au/nsw/outreach/)

**Outreach Awareness Day was held at the St Vincent's Darlinghurst campus on Friday May 13th, 2005, giving Outreach volunteers and managers the opportunity to connect with staff.**



## *Profile: The Sant'Egidio Community*

The Community of Sant'Egidio, is a *Church public lay association* with more than 50,000 members. Started in Rome in 1968 before spreading to more than 70 countries, the different communities share the same spirituality and principles which characterise the way of Sant'Egidio: Prayer, Communicating the Gospel, Solidarity with the Poor, Ecumenism and Dialogue. The activities and structure of the Sant'Egidio organisation provide an interesting model for integrating the resources of a religious order in a contemporary setting. For more information about the Community : [www.santegidio.org/en/](http://www.santegidio.org/en/)



## *Overseas Missions: A KIT feature prepared by Patricia Jacobsen, Congregational Archivist*

The first five Sisters to arrive in Australia on 31 December, 1838 had volunteered to work as Catholic missionaries in the British penal colony of New South Wales. Mary Aikenhead, the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity in Ireland, responded to the call made by Bishop Bede Polding for help in caring for the spiritual and physical welfare of the early settlers in the colony, particularly the female convicts. Those pioneering sisters laid the foundations for the development of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Australia and its diverse ministries.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Congregation embarked upon its own overseas missionary activities in many different countries, where they have shared their expertise in education, health and welfare with local organizations. Several sisters, such as Sister Anne Crowley, have spent many years in overseas missionary work. Sister Anne began her missionary work in Fiji in 1962 and since then has taught in pre- and post-Independence Papua New Guinea and later in Zambia. She has also worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Thailand (1985-1987) and in the Meheba Refugee Camp in Zambia (1995-2000).



Sister Anne Crowley rsc Supervising kindergarten meal-time, Bundi, PNG (1964)

During the period from 1963-1982, teaching sisters worked in Catholic primary schools in Bundi and Megiar in Papua New Guinea and since that time Sisters of Charity worked as educationalists in Bougainville, Goroka, Rabaul, Vanimo, the Solomon Islands, Western and American Samoa, China, Nigeria and Zambia. As well as providing education at primary and secondary levels, the

Sisters have also aimed to lay the foundations for indigenous education systems. In fact, the Congregation's first overseas mission in Fiji (1957-1966) was specifically aimed at providing secondary education to the indigenous Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth to prepare them for Teacher Training. In some cases, the Sisters have assisted the teaching apostolates of other Catholic congregations, such as the Sisters of Charity of Ireland in Zambia. In 1984, in response to a request for teaching sisters, Sisters Patricia Heenan and Suzette Clark travelled to Zambia and Australian Sisters of Charity were involved in education ministries in that country until 2003.

Since the 1960s, the sisters have nursed in hospitals in developing countries and have provided nursing education to indigenous sisters so that they can develop the requisite skills to administer their own health establishments. One such instance was the role of Sisters Dorothy Bayliss and Frances Kelly (nursing sisters) who went to Ra, Fiji (1980-1982) to assist in the establishment of a Maternity Hospital. Subsequently, the Congregation arranged for the midwifery training at St. Vincent's Hospital, Toowoomba of Fijian Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth.

In more recent decades, the sisters have travelled to conflict zones in Africa, South-East Asia, Macedonia/Kosovo, Bougainville, and East Timor, where they have worked with government and non-government organizations to alleviate the pain and suffering of the victims of civil and international wars and, unfortunately, genocide. In 1971, Sister Kathleen Higgs joined a St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney medical team which spent six months working in war-torn Vietnam. Sister Dorothy Bayliss undertook more missionary work during the years 1986-1990 working with the American Marist Missionary Sisters of Mary at the Tearouki Health Centre, Bougainville. Unfortunately, during the armed revolt led by the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, Sister Dorothy and her colleagues had to abandon the Health Centre and flee for their lives.

Sister Karan Varker, RSC, who also worked with the MMSM in a teaching role on Bougainville





Sr. Kathleen Higgs rsc (1938-2002) working as a paediatric sister at Bien Hoa Provincial Hospital, Vietnam

experienced the dangerous and volatile period as Sister Dorothy but tried to continue her work, despite the threatening circumstances in Bougainville at that time. During the conflict in Cambodia/Kampuchea, the Congregation received a request from International Red Cross for nursing sisters to join its humanitarian effort with the refugees in that country. Sisters Claire Nolan and Leone Wittmack responded to that request and provided nursing assistance in the refugee camps during 1979/1980 and Sister Sesarina Bau helped to distribute medical supplies to the camps in 1980/1981. During the 1994 crisis in Rwanda, Sisters Leone Wittmack and Adele Cottrell-Dormer travelled to Goma, Zaire with a Care Australia team, where they spent one month caring for unaccompanied Rwandan refugee children in that camp. They were then requested to establish a centre for unaccompanied refugee children in Butare, Rwanda, where they worked until the end of November 1994.

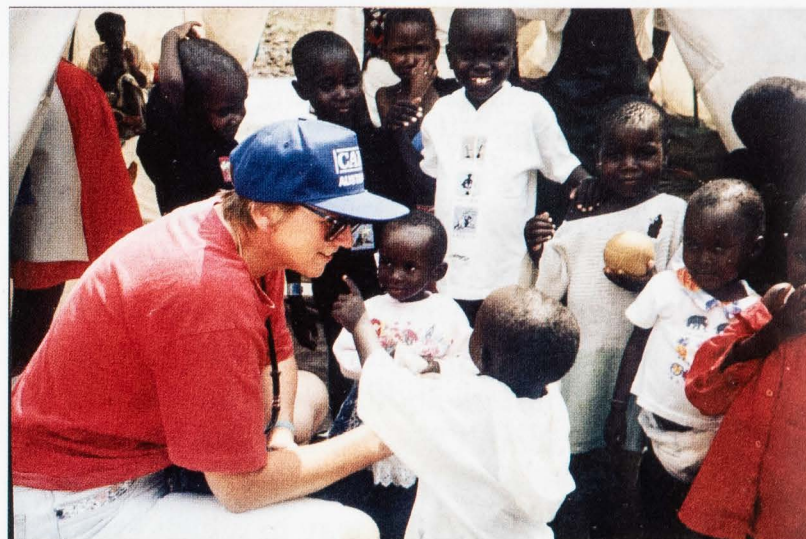
Following another massacre in Rwanda, Sister Leone returned to Rwanda where she cared for 1000 unaccompanied Rwandan refugee children. Subsequently, Sister Leone and Sister Adele were awarded Humanitarian Overseas Aid Medals for their work with refugees in Rwanda and Macedonia, where Sister Adele undertook refugee work during the Kosova crisis in 1999.



Sister Mark Lehman, rsc, giving geography lesson to a Fijian Sister of our Lady of Nazareth, circa. 1958

In 2000 Sister Christine Jorgensen, a nursing sister, went to East Timor and witnessed the devastation which occurred during the violent aftermath of that country's pro-independence vote. During her ministry in East Timor, Sister worked as a coordinator of a health programme and assisted in the establishment of health clinics. She was instrumental in establishing the Health Project, "Karidade Health", for which the Congregation had agreed to accept responsibility and to provide some funding. In October 2003, the Sisters of Charity of Australia withdrew from the Karidade Project, which is now part of the structure of the National Health Department of East Timor.

Sister Adele Cottrell-Dormer, RSC, a Care Australia volunteer working with refugees in Rwanda (1994)



This brief overview names some of the Sisters, who have responded across the years to the call of the Congregation's mission overseas. It illustrates how compassionately and creatively the Sisters of Charity of Australia have responded whenever and wherever they have seen a need for assistance, guidance and support, both in Australia and overseas.



### Sister Agnes Skewes, from page 5

The most striking example of how Agnes could surrender her own views was the work on the Constitutions. She took a ship back from Europe at one stage so that she could have the peace and quiet she needed to rewrite the Constitutions. The ones we were using were those that had been done to satisfy the requirements of canon law in the early twentieth century. Aggiornamento asked us to rewrite Constitutions more in keeping with our origins. No one can know how many versions Agnes made and how willingly she listened to Patricia Regan and others on the committee and how she began again each time it was necessary, disregarding all the work she had done already.

Many of us saw, after her eighteen years as superior general, how to some extent Agnes had lost her own self and become totally absorbed in the role she had filled, so that life as an ordinary Sister was for a time difficult for her and everyone else. When you have been in charge for eighteen years, you want to see your initiatives continued. It took time for Agnes to adjust to being a feather duster instead of a rooster.

Perhaps that adjustment was, in the end, one of her greatest achievements. At Potts Point, Agnes was happy to answer the door and phone and, more importantly, did these tasks with charm and grace. She was reluctant to leave the warmth of the Potts Point community for a nursing home, and it took time again for her to settle down there. When she did, she could appreciate the kindness of all the Sisters. Some, like Rose and Christine, kept her supplied with reading. When I described the Requiem of Ann Conway's sister, and how detective novels were put on her coffin as a symbol, Agnes said that she'd like that, too. When Agnes mentioned a Sister, it was usually accompanied by a remark about how kind she was, particularly when she spoke about Christine and the Potts Point Sisters. She appreciated the visits of Jan O'Grady and Natalie and what they brought with them. The way in which I recognised her room the day before she died was by the photographs of beloved waratahs that came through the Potts Point community.

So, in my last email to St Peter, I was able to tell him that he didn't have to listen to all that Agnes achieved in her life. What was important was that she loved her family, friends and Congregation, did her best in whatever God asked her to do, had a great sense of humour and mellowed from someone who saw herself as essentially her role, to someone who appreciated life for itself, who had time to reflect on God's plan for her, and who expressed gratitude and love for all who cared for her. She can tell him that she did all she was ordered to do.

The rest is with God.

Sister Kerry Barrass, R.S.C. has come to live with us in our Parish Community. Sister introduces herself this way:

"My name is Kerry Barrass. I am a Sister of Charity and have been in the Order since 1958. I have been professed 44 years. I have worked on the Motor Mission (C.C.D.), Adult Education, Parish Work, Youth Ministry, Infant Teaching and Counselling. Jack or should I say Jill of all Trades. I have come here to this Parish to help where I can. I am a country girl at heart.. My Mum and Dad were mostly in country areas of N.S.W.-Urana, Wagga, Windsor, Bundanoon, Yass and Camden.

So, I hope I shall meet lots of lovely people here in the Parish. Come and say hello. I'd love to meet you all. If I can help in any way at any time, just let me know ! Looking forward to meeting you all. Peace, Sister Kerry."

Sister Karan Vakar has prepared a Catholic Education System Handbook for schools in the Diocese of Gizo. The fifty page handbook provides comprehensive guidelines for operating Catholic schools, covering a full spectrum of information from organisational charts to pupil report templates.

In his forward to the handbook, Bishop Bernard O'Grady OP noted that the handbook was part of a process to "set right the lack of training in the methodology of religious education, loss of motivation and shortness of resources." Karan included this extract from "The Catholic School" {Rome, 1992}:

*"The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by work but also in every gesture of their behaviour...Christ is the teaching centre, the model on whom the Christian shapes his or her life".*



## *Meet the three Sisters of Charity World Youth Day Ambassadors*

**Joseph Suttie** works as a medical registrar at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney where he has studied and worked since 1997. His work brings him contact with a vast number of people experiencing sickness in areas as diverse as palliative care and drug and alcohol abuse. While still a medical student at the University of NSW, Joseph was recognized for his work with the inner city homeless community with the Universities volunteerism award. From 1999 to 2000 Joseph was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to study at the University of Cambridge. Joseph currently leads a youth group committed to social justice since attending the World Youth Days in Rome in 2000 and Toronto in 2002. Joseph said "St Vincent's is an extraordinary place. It breathes the spirit of compassion and aspiration to social justice that has always characterized the Sisters of Charity." Joseph hopes that this scholarship will allow him to work with young people in Germany and Ireland also committed to solidarity and social justice.



**Kate Debelak** is 27 and works at Mt St Michael's College in Brisbane as a Maths and Science teacher and holds the position of Year 11 Coordinator. She was educated at St Rita's College where she excelled not only in Maths and Science, but in particular Study of Religion, and started her teaching career in 2001 at All Hallows' School. Since beginning at Mt St Michael's in 2003, she has embraced the heritage of the Sisters of Charity by attempting to live out her vision of teaching of holistic education where not only the academic needs of students are embraced but also the pastoral, cultural and spiritual needs so that every student is treated as an individual and they are nurtured and mentored in an environment that values respect, justice, co-operation and compassion. Kate is looking forward to the experiences and opportunities that will come from attending the World Youth Day Celebrations, particularly sharing these with her students on her return and forming a longstanding bond with the other participants from Sisters of Charity institutions. Apart from playing the bass guitar, Kate enjoys reading, walking her dog and watching old movies.

**Tammie Addley** is 24 and works at Mt Olivet Hospital, as an occupational therapist in the Rehabilitation Service. Tammie has worked with the Young Christian Workers movement in Brisbane for 5 years. This is an international organisation that is run by, and for young adults, between the ages of 18 to 30. The focus is on social justice and the dignity of every person, and the primary concern is the everyday life of young workers. Young people are encouraged to take action to bring about change in their home, workplace and social life according to their faith values. Tammie currently works at both the Brisbane and National levels of this movement, with the motivation of "changing the world, one worker at a time".

Tammie's hopes for World Youth Day are many: a renewed relationship with her God, an intense experience of global solidarity and to create a sustained connection with young workers from all over the world.





## The Sisters of Charity of Australia

### *New Pathways* with Sister Elizabeth Dodds

We have decided to develop a new look for KIT. The aim is to draw on the best of our earlier style and approach, and at the same time to add more items of appeal, creating the opportunity to reflect on the many dimensions of our Mission and at the same time to keep our Sisters and our Partners in Mission “up to date” with our forward directions.

In this edition for instance we have (we hope) encapsulated something of the spirit of the Sponsorship Conference which took place in Melbourne at the beginning of April. We also anticipate the all-important Gathering in July.

Your comments on the new KIT and suggestions for ongoing items of interest are most welcome. Simply email [James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com](mailto:James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com) and these comments will be passed to me.

KIT will also be available through our website: [www.sistersofcharity.org.au](http://www.sistersofcharity.org.au)

### *New Directions for the Congregation*

Our Sponsorship Conference 2005 “Carrying the Vision into the Future” was, on all counts, a success. It was quite a feat to get so many leaders together representing our incorporated Ministries, Partner Congregations, and other associates, especially with a large number of inter-State attendees. Choice of the Melbourne Airport Hilton as venue was a good one.

It was a marvellous mix of people with lively interest in the topic of sponsorship. This was evident not only in the excellent presentations by our Congregational Leader and our Canon lawyer and theologian expert speakers but also in the quality of the discussion and comments from all participants. In grappling with such questions as, “What are the signs of the prophetic?” and “What is involved in establishing a PJP? (Public Juridic Person)”, there was quite a range and depth of viewpoints represented.

The Sponsorship content and material of the Con-

ference was at times challenging. We were most fortunate to have Fr Frank Morrissey, OMI, from Canada as our “corner stone” speaker, to explain canonical models of sponsorship. This he did with remarkable ease, encapsulating the experience of eleven (yes, eleven!) university degrees and decades of canonical and Church scholarship in an accessible and often humorous way.

The Conference was timely and important in opening up conversations about sponsorship. For many it was the first time for considering the relationship of “sponsorship” to “ownership” and “governance” and how best to be accountable to the Church in the future for our ongoing Mission and Ministries. It certainly helped to have available to us the wisdom and considered views not only of Fr Frank Morrissey, but also our local experts, Fr Gerry Arbuckle, Fr Ian Waters, and Br Brian Sweeney.

The Conference was ably facilitated by Kerry Brettell, who kept us running to time, and ably supported by the pre-Conference ‘logistics team’ from SCHS National Office.

As an outcome of the conference, letters have gone out to the Bishops and Archbishops in those dioceses where we have ministries, informing them of the proceedings. They too will be invited into the ongoing conversations on this most important topic.

Sr Leone Wittmack’s segment with its wonderful symbolism, was outstanding.

We can say with confidence that the seeds of Sponsorship have been firmly planted for our transition to new Sponsorship in the future. With watering and nurturing, may they flourish.

*Published by Sisters of Charity Congregational Office  
Level 1, 75 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction NSW 2022  
Phone: (02) 9367 1222 Fax: (02) 9367 1223  
[James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com](mailto:James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com)*

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