



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

April 2006
Volume 7 Number 1

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



Mater Centenary Mass

As part of the Liturgy of the Word at the Mater Centenary Mass, two lamps were carried forward by Sr. Elizabeth Dodds rsc Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity and Sr. Jennifer Ryan rsm Congregation Leader of the Sisters of Mercy.

Inside this issue:

- 2 Induction for Sister Cate O'Brien
- 2,3 Jubilees
- 5 Vale Sister Marion Corless
- 6 The Robina Journey
- 6 Appreciation for Sister Natalie
- 7 Award for Sister Bernice
- 8 New Pathways: Poverty in Australia

100 Years of Service at the Mater Hospital

On Sunday February 12th, the Centenary Mass for the Mater Hospital was held at St Mary's Church, North Sydney, with Bishop David Cremin DD, VG, Bishop Peter Ingham DD and Father Mark Raper SJ concelebrating.

St Mary's was overflowing, with many Sisters from both orders attending, as well as our many supporters including the Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, and Sir William and Lady Deane. Sr Carmel McDonough rsm in her address referred to the historical connection between the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Charity...a collaboration that continues today at the Mater Hospital.

Both were fledgling Congregations in Ireland "in the latter half of the 19th Century. The objectives of the Sisters of Mercy included charitable nursing of the indigent sick and the tuition of the young. Nursing was an essential aspect of the Mission of the Sisters of Mercy". The Sisters of Charity were also founded to minister to the sick poor in their homes and to educate the children of the poor.

more pictures on page 4



Father Tim Harris, Bishop Brian Finnigan with Cate O'Brien rsc

Induction for Cate O'Brien

Bishop Brian Finnigan joined Father Tim Harris and the parishioners of Corinda Graceville Catholic Parish in inducting Sister Cate O'Brien rsc as the new Pastoral Associate for the Parish. As Sister Cate is back in her home Diocese her family were able to attend. It was a great occasion to celebrate with Cate and her family and also to officially welcome her into the Parish.

The Corinda Graceville Catholic Parish was formed in 1997 with the amalgamation of Christ the King Parish at Graceville and St Joseph's Parish at Corinda.

Jubilee Celebration

On the evening of February 10th, 2006, Sister Annette (Patricia Hall) celebrated her 50 years as a Sister of Charity. Annette was professed on 23rd January, 1956.



Sister Annette Hall rsc

At 5 p.m. the Eucharist was celebrated by Father Mel Cotter O.F.M. in the convent chapel at 40 West Street, Darlinghurst. Celebrating with Sister Annette were her Darlinghurst community, Sister-in-law Norma Hall, the Congregational Leader, Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Councillors Sisters Lauren Dixon and Margaret Beirne, fellow jubilarians Sisters Jean Montgomery and Pauline Staunton, Sisters from the West Street Terraces, and friends Sisters Maria Wheeler and Helen Clarke.

After Mass, guests were entertained with a DVD compiled by Sister Maria featuring some highlights from Annette's life. Boarding two mini-buses, guests were conveyed to the La Fortune Chinese restaurant in North Sydney, where a delicious meal was enjoyed by all. A happy and memorable evening of celebration!

For Your Diary:

SCES - Sisters of Charity Education Service 2006 Conference is scheduled for May 26th & 27th.

Sr Mathilde Harnischfeger will leave Nigeria on 26th June, travelling to England and Scotland then to Germany. Sister will arrive home in Brisbane on 28th July.

August Jubilees

Diamond - 70 years

Sr Dorothy Harrison - 22nd Aug

Diamond - 60 years

Sr Sarah Ryan

31st August

Sr Jennifer Fahey

31st August

Golden - 50 years

Sr Margaret Galvin

16th August

Sr Maree Henderson

16th August

Sr Monette Mason

16th August

Sr Joan McKenna

16th August

Sr Ellen O'Carrigan

16th August

Sr Patricia Scully

16th August

Sr Mary Maguire

16th August

Sr Patricia Nunan

16th August

Jubilee Celebration

My Jubilee was held on January 21st at Sacred Heart Church, Cabramatta...on a very hot Saturday afternoon. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Chris Toohey, Bishop of Wilcannia/Forbes, with Father Pat McAuliffe, parish priest of Cabramatta, concelebrating.

Many of our Sisters were present as well as friends-including catechists and teachers with whom I have worked over the years.

My sister-in-law, Helen, and my niece, Janelle, took part in the Offertory Procession and were greatly impressed by the ceremony.

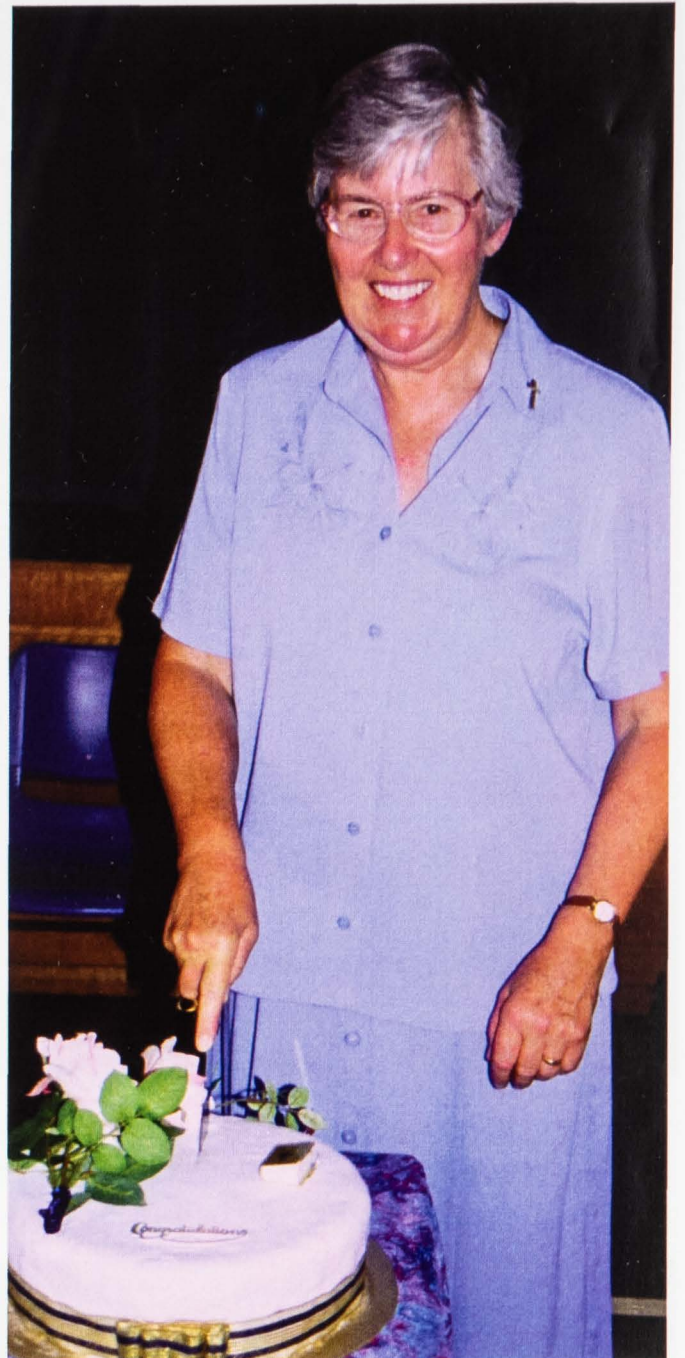
The Church was beautifully decorated with gold and white flowers, along with an Australian theme – as the Parish was celebrating Australia Day the following day. Parishioners of Sacred Heart parish arranged all this, and members of the parish social committee prepared the beautiful afternoon tea.

A special jubilee cake [pictured] was made and decorated by Janet Peardon, niece of Sister Virginia Wilkinson. My gratitude goes to each and every one of these wonderful people.

In his homily, Bishop Toohey spoke of a vocation to religious life as being “incredibly wonderful and mind-blowing”. He also spoke of the absolute importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus who energises and enables us to carry on his love in the world. He emphasised too that a Jubilee is a time of grace and blessing, and this has certainly been true for me.

I want to thank the Congregation and my community at Ashfield for enabling me to celebrate my Jubilee in such a beautiful way, and I thank every Sister for the prayers that have been offered for me during this time.

JEAN MONTGOMERY rsc



Sister Jean Montgomery rsc cutting her Jubilee cake

The Mater Centenary Mass included a Procession of Gifts, celebrating the hundred years of service to the North Shore community, the State and our region. Photos courtesy Medici Graphics.





A DVD has been produced of the Mater Centenary Mass. Running 80 minutes, it is a wonderful record of this historic occasion. Loan copies are available through the Congregational Office.



Vale Sister Marion Corless

Sister Marion Corless was born on 27th February 1913 to Jack and Johanna Corless of Dulwich Hill. She commenced school at St. Vincent's College Potts Point in 1923, having been first to the Catholic primary school at Dulwich Hill. Sister Marion was a good student and excelled not only academically but also in her care and consideration of other students. Upon leaving school Marion worked for a few years and in 1933 entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity, taking her final vows in 1939. At the time of her profession she became Sister Mary Reparata, returning to Sister Marion after Vatican II.

Throughout the years, Sister Marion taught at St Vincent's, Potts Point, St Columba's College, Essendon, Mt St Mary's, Katoomba, Bethlehem College, Ashfield and St John's College, Auburn.

In 1973 she was elected to the position of Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity. She remained Leader for twelve years, holding the great respect of our Sisters in all ministries.

In 1985 and 1986 she was Director of Novices. In 1985 she was asked by Cardinal Edward Clancy to be the Associate Vicar for religious in the Archdiocese of Sydney, a position she held until 1993 when she was appointed Parish Co-ordinator at Blackheath.

During the years Sister Marion has been a great educator, friend and mentor to the many girls she taught at the various schools. No matter where her former pupils wandered, Sister Marion would find them and be there for them in their various journeys through life. She has been an inspiration and an outstanding role model for all to try and follow. She had a deep love of God, the Sisters of Charity, her family and her alma mater.

In 1979 Sister Marion received an MBE for her dedication and life-long work in the field of education. In 2003 Pope John Paul II bestowed upon Sister Marion the Papal Honour of Croce Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice. Sister Marion accepted both of these awards with gratitude and humility.



Sister Marion's love of family was evident. She was very close to her brother, Desmond, who had followed in their father's footsteps and had become a well-known journalist. Des and his wife Mary are both deceased. Marion was close to their three children Yvonne, Deanne and Gregory...as she was to her cousins Ruth and Barbara.

When Marion became ill the Sisters of Charity visited her morning, noon and night, and she was never alone. The love and care they showed was outstanding, with Sisters living interstate making the journey to Sydney to be part of the bedside vigil. Ex-students were also continually visiting her and even though she was in poor health, she would raise a smile and offer a soft word to each one. Ruth Foran, her cousin, visited her daily and sat with her for hours: They were alone together on the morning of December 9th, 2005 when Sister Marion closed her eyes and peacefully passed away.

The motto of St Vincent's College is "*Scientia cum Religione*" ... but the motto of the Sisters of Charity is the one that Sister Marion lived by... "*Caritas Christi Urget Nos*".

Marion Corless was indeed a true follower of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Mother Mary Aikenhead. Sleep peacefully dear Marion, in God's care until we meet again.

In Appreciation of Sister Natalie

On St John of God Day, March 8th, Sister Natalie Pike received the following letter of appreciation: During the past eight years, Sister Natalie has been a faithful and committed volunteer at Casa Venegas. No stranger to those with mental illness, she joined the team in 1988. It is often hard to establish a rapport or relationship with some of our more chronic residents – yet Natalie's ability to be "where they were at" spoke volumes. As she now begins another phase of her life, it allows us to remember the gifts, talents and energy she brought to Casa. Natalie is a story teller, the keeper of many stories about the beginning of psychiatric care at St Vincent's in Darlinghurst, which she imparted to the team and those around her...her stories although funny at times, horrific and sad on others occasions, contained a deeper root which was love. Love for those whom she was asked to serve, love of God and love of the team she found herself attached to. Her words of encouragement, her insights and wisdom made her a great person to accompany the team in their daily delivery of care.

Volunteers are the backbone of the organisation, their ability to fit in when needed is of paramount importance to the continuation of the ministry. Sister Natalie was certainly no stranger to work; she is such a person that saw a need and just went and did it because it was needed. Things for Natalie were about joy and pleasure and she assisted wherever she could. Her smile, kind words and laughter will be sadly missed, as well as those delicious rice puddings.

On behalf of the Brothers, Mal, Sandra, Maria and all the clients of Casa Venegas, we wish you well in your future endeavours. Thank You and God Bless.

Casa Venegas, a housing program for people whose homelessness is compounded by a psychiatric illness, is conducted by the Brothers of St John of God.

Casa Venegas activities include:

Helping people who are suffering with alcohol and other drug-related issues.

Working with marginalised young people who are homeless.

Working with people who have AIDS and other related illnesses.

Hospital chaplaincy.

Working with adults with a wide range of intellectual, psychiatric and sensory motor disabilities.

Working with families whose need for assistance is manifested in a child's emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The Robina Journey

It is difficult to adequately describe the experience shared at Robina Convent on 19th March, 2006. The Sisters had chosen the theme of journey for the final liturgy as the Queensland Sisters of Charity gathered with others, who had been a significant part of the community. The ritual concluded the ministry of Nola Riley and Margaret O'Brien in the Burleigh Heads and Karan Varker in Southport Parishes and marked the closing of the convent. It was the end of one stage of a journey and the beginning of the next.

It was a day of mixed emotions. We were grateful for all the seeds that the Sisters had sown. We rejoiced in the journey, begun in trust and concluded with pain; we acknowledged the obstacles encountered and the challenge of leaving our "boats" behind, as we prepared to move on in faith. At the same time, there was sadness at leaving a group of people, who like the apostles continued to say, "stay with us". Elizabeth Dodds, our Congregational Leader reminded us that a full response to God's call to us today would move us towards the Cross.

The celebration itself was a journey. It commenced with the task of finding transport, then the further challenge of finding a driver, who knew how to get to Robina convent without getting totally lost! The travellers then gathered to share their news, to pray and to break bread. The women from Burleigh Heads Parish lovingly prepared a three-course meal, (including a baked dinner) for the Sisters. Singing and dancing to the music of the multi-talented "Roger" added to the joy of the celebration. The journey concluded with expressions of gratitude, the farewells and finally the removal of the tabernacle to a new resting place.

Contributed by Colleen Noonan rsc

Some of our Queensland Sisters in the Mt Olivet Chapel





Companion of Australia for Sister Mary Bernice

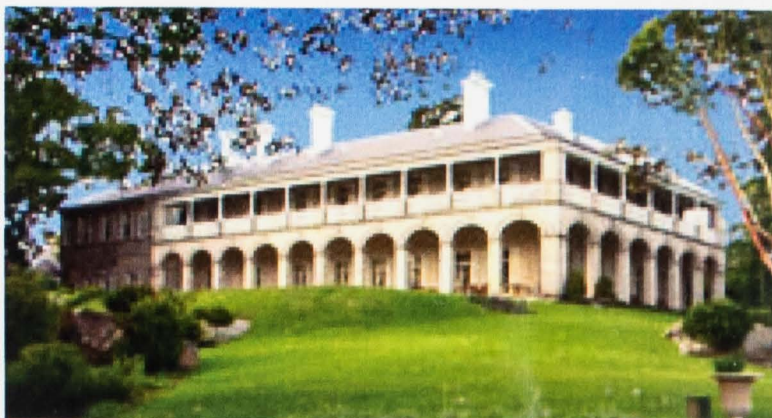
On Thursday 9th March 2006, Sister Mary Bernice Elphick received Australia's highest honour when she was made a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia. The investiture took place at Admiralty House, Kirribilli, and the Sydney residence of the Governor-General.

It was a private ceremony as Sister Mary Bernice was not well enough to travel to Canberra. The Governor-General, Michael Jeffery, presented Sister with her award in the presence of the Congregational Leader and Councillors, the community of 40 West Street, Darlinghurst, members of her family, Imelda Roche, and Pat Garside.

His Excellency congratulated Sister on her passion for healthcare and on being one of the driving forces in the multi-disciplinary initiatives on the St Vincent's campus in Sydney. We were all graciously welcomed and after the ceremony we were served afternoon tea and encouraged to explore the 18th Century home with its verandahs, spacious rooms and magnificent gardens. Many guests enjoyed taking the path to Sydney Harbour, as it was a very warm day.

It was a significant occasion for the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, and we were privileged to be present. Sister Mary Bernice, no doubt, accepted her award on behalf of our early Sisters and the many others who have worked with her over the years and have helped place all of our missionary works on the St Vincent's campus at the forefront of healthcare in Australia today.

Admiralty House, Kirribilli



NEW PATHWAYS From page 8

Jesus' ministry was essentially among and for the poor; his stated message was "to bring good news to the poor". Many Gospel stories and parables illustrate where he was coming from in his ministry. A favourite scriptural passage for followers of Christ in the tradition of Mary Aikenhead is the parable of Dives and Lazarus. This parable is one Mary Aikenhead reflected on frequently. Another good example is the observation of Jesus about the widow's mite.

The Word of God speaks to each of us.

A complete transcript of Sister Elizabeth's address is available from James Griffiths at the Congregational Office, either as an email or in print.



In March, Sister Elizabeth addressed the Sisters of Charity Health Service Leadership Retreat. Here is an extract from the address, titled "Poverty in Australia - Our Response : The Congregational Leader's Perspective and Expectations".

It is the love of Christ which overwhelms us!

Just before Christmas I climbed the Sydney Harbour Bridge with my youngest niece. It was the first climb of the day and a spectacular and super crisp vista of the city unfolded before us. I have reflected on that experience and that incredible view many times. I grew up in the city of Sydney and I had many experiences of the Bridge. How many times I had driven by car across it and under it; been transported from one side of the harbour to the other by bus, train or ferry.

Frequently I had walked across the bridge but never had I climbed the ladders, scaled the arches or stood in awe at the very top of the bridge.

It gave me a totally different perspective both of my birth city and of the phenomenal engineering structure that the Bridge is.

And so with poverty and the expectations of the Sisters of Charity. Poverty is something most of us view each day. We walk around it, travel through it, among it. We dig deep; but rarely can we view from a height its structure and form, its gnawing bite into the dignity of a human person. Rarely do we get an overview of how we as Sisters of Charity and we as leadership personnel, Board directors and advisors exercise social accountability and service of the poor.

It is my privilege during the past three years to get such an overview – to stand as it were on the top of the bridge and observe.

In Mary Aikenhead's time and place, nineteenth

century Ireland, the visibility and the extent of poverty led to the inclusion of the fourth vow, service of the poor, for those who sought to become part of the fledgling Congregation she was establishing.

Service of the poor is, therefore, central to who we are as Sisters of Charity. It was at the heart of our founding story and has been ever since. It is a distinguishing feature of our charism.

As Congregational Leader, I do have a perspective on what this should mean for us today. The tradition of Catholic Social Teaching is grounded in the principle of the dignity of the human person as made in the very image of God. It calls upon people of faith to uphold and protect that dignity wherever it is violated. Wherever a person is denied basic human rights, such as a place to live, food, clothing, an adequate income, access to essential services, their dignity is diminished. Poverty robs people of the capacity to be "fully alive" in the image of God. The Church's concern about poverty in our contemporary world, its causes and dire outcomes, led to the articulation of another key principle of Catholic Social Teaching, namely of taking "a preferential option for the poor". Pope John Paul II made this observation in his 1987 encyclical *On Social Concern*:

A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope.(42)

These key principles, the dignity of the human person and the preferential option for the poor draw their inspiration directly from the Scriptures, especially the prophets of the old testament and the life and ministry of Jesus.

Continues page 7

KEEP IN TOUCH is published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.
Level 1, 75 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022
Telephone 02 9367 1222 Fax 02 9367 1223
email James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com

PRIVACY STATEMENT The Sisters of Charity have a privacy policy statement detailing how personal information is managed, pursuant to the Privacy Act 1988 and the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. People receiving this newsletter via mail will have their names on our database. This list is not used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other organisation. If you would like your name removed from this list, please contact the Congregational Office.