



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

# Keep in Touch

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

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Our Tasmanian Sisters: From Left, Sisters Felix Thorburn, Catherine Meese, Anne Turner, Katheen Kennedy, Josephine Cannell, Colleen Jackson and Dorothy Bayliss at the "Gathering of Religious Women" in Launceston earlier this year.

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As part of the College's Indigenous Awareness Programme, students from CLC Eltham visited the Murputja school in the far north west of South Australia in the Pitjanjatjara Aboriginal Lands. The school services the two small Aboriginal communities of Nyapari and Kanypi.

# Encomium for Maryanne Confoy rsc

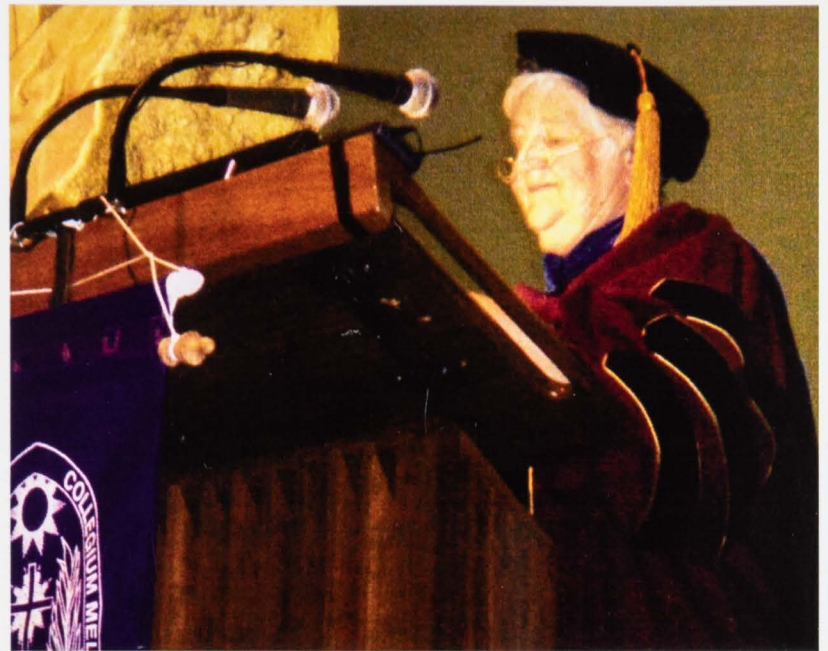
On Friday March 31st, 2006 Sister Maryanne Confoy rsc BA MEd PhD was installed as a Fellow of the Melbourne College of Divinity. Here is an edited version of the speech delivered by Sister Dr Kathleen Williams rsm prior to Sister Maryanne receiving her Fellowship.

“Dr Confoy’s name is synonymous with academic excellence, educational development and administrative expertise with the MCD over several decades. It is rare for one to open the minutes of the academic Boards and Committees of the MCD from the 80’s and 90’s to the present without encountering the name of Maryanne Confoy.

Dr Confoy has been an outstanding lecturer in the field of Practical Theology and Christian Education for some 25 years, first at Yarra Theological Union and then at the United Faculty of Theology. Units she teaches such as *Educating and Ministering through Life Passages* and *Faithfulness, Conversion and the Search for the Transcendent* are eagerly sought out by discerning students. Dr Confoy is also sought out by many postgraduate students of the College to supervise the preparation of their theses. She was supervisor of Dr Marie Macdonald, the first Catholic laywoman to receive a Doctorate of Theology from the MCD, in 1989. Dr Confoy is currently supervising 14 theses, including three at doctoral level, a supervisory responsibility unrivalled within the MCD. Dr Confoy’s commitment to ecumenism, social justice, spirituality and pastoral care distinguishes her teaching and supervision.

Dr Confoy was the inaugural Chair of the Christian Spirituality Centre in 1998, and continues this role as the Chair of the newly-named Institute for Christian Spirituality and Pastoral Formation.

Dr Confoy is Visiting Professor at the Institute



Above: Sister Maryanne Confoy accepting her Fellowship. Below: Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Patricia (Trisha) Confoy and Sister Anthea Groves were present at the Encomium.



of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry at Boston College, Massachusetts, and is responsible for this College’s Summer Comprehensives. Dr Confoy’s scholarly publications are many and include most recently the book *Morris West: Literary Maverick*. Dr Confoy is also Chair of the Cabrini Hospital Mission Integration Committee, and a Board member of The Way, a ministry for homeless men.

Dr Confoy has inspired academics, students, teachers, women and men in many walks of life, both inside and outside the Melbourne College of Divinity with her whole-hearted commitment to excellence in academic endeavours, and with her deep and abiding compassion for people in need of spiritual guidance and material sustenance. Dr Confoy models in her life the Congregational charism of the Sisters of Charity to which she belongs *to bring to each person the love, tenderness and concern of Christ for the poor, seeing Christ in everyone we serve*”.

# Social Justice

Recently, the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes Assembly was held in Adelaide. During the Assembly, Sister Pauline Coll, sgs, coordinator of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan Against the Trafficking in Women and Children, addressed participants on the issue of Human Trafficking: Stop Slavery. Pauline made the strong point that slavery exists here and now in Australia. The next day, Pauline and leaders of Australia's Religious Congregations held a lunch-time rally in Victoria Square, Adelaide, to protest against the existence of trafficking in Australia and to show support for the work being done to end this modern day slavery.

## The Sisters of Charity

Sr Elizabeth Dodds, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity, attended the Assembly and was present at the rally. Sister Elizabeth has made a personal commitment and pledged on behalf of the Sisters of Charity, both a financial contribution and personnel to this cause. In the spirit of Mary Aikenhead, she sees the task as one of both advocacy and action: advocating for an end to slavery and the abolition of structures that perpetuate this evil, and actively participating in services which alleviate the suffering of the victims of the practice of human trafficking.

"In solidarity with women and men religious throughout the world and especially in Australia we commit ourselves to advocacy and to



Religious Leaders say NO to Slavery

action to eradicate human trafficking. Such an injustice is contrary to the Gospel of life. We must say NO and ENOUGH is ENOUGH to all forms of slavery."

## Religious Congregations' Anti-Trafficking Working Group

In 2001, at the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) gathering in Rome, leaders of religious congregations of women throughout the world spoke of their experiences. The trafficking of women and children emerged as an issue. By the end of the Plenary some 800 leaders from 77 different countries of the 5 continents proclaimed their commitment to work in solidarity to counteract human trafficking:

*We publicly declare our determination to: Work in solidarity with one another within our own religious communities and in the countries in which we are located to address insistently at every level the abuse and sexual exploitation of women and children with particular attention to the trafficking of women which has become a lucrative multi-national business.*

## Sisters of Charity Advocacy Network

SCAN Meetings in Sydney and Melbourne this year have focussed on the issue of Human Trafficking: Stop Slavery. Participants were given the opportunity for prayer and reflection on this issue, were provided with information and facts, listened to the stories of some of the victims, and developed ideas for action and advocacy.

Contributed by Sister Suzette Clarke. Suzette accompanied Elizabeth at the rally.

# Farewell Robina

More photos from the gathering to mark the end of the Congregation's presence in Robina, Burleigh Heads and Southport Parishes.



Sister Margaret O'Brien and Sister Nola Riley

## Thank you Sister Judith

Sister Judith Peart was warmly thanked by Students, Teachers, Support Staff, Past Students, Parents, Families and Friends as she said farewell to Catholic Ladies College at the end of this year's first term. Sister Judith was seen by the College community as "our woman of Faith, Hope and Charity." *The Collegian* recounted some of the inspiring questions and statements shared by Sister Judith:

Have you ever prayed about this?  
I will light a candle for you as you are completing your exams.  
Take some time out to reflect on what is going on in your life at the moment.  
Always turn to God, remember God is always there.  
Can I say a prayer with you?  
We can do this together.  
Have you ever thought about...?  
Here is a little something to brighten your day.  
How much money can we give Moira Kelly to help the little ones?  
Remember others who are not as well off as you.  
You could do with a hug!

Sister Judith continues her ministry at St Finbar's, East Brighton.



[seated] Sisters Karan Varker, Leone Wittmack and Sesarina Bau



Sisters Margaret Anne Sapsford, Maureen Delaney and Colleen Noonan

# Sister Jose Thompson rsc

When I learnt of Sister Jose's passing it struck me that her death marks the closing of an era for the Sisters of Charity and for many Bethlehem ex-students of the 1960's in particular. Jose taught there as Sister Austen, teaching Religion, Maths, Chemistry and many Performing Arts subjects.

Sometimes it's something she said that echoes in my mind. "Girls, don't just sit back! You have to show initiative! Apathy is a curse!" She introduced the Young Catholic Students {YCS} to us at Bethlehem, and we were invited to form groups according to our interests, such as Current Affairs, Music, Drama and Fashion. Group leaders would begin each meeting with a prayer, and we would see how we could accentuate Christian values within these subjects.

I remember Jose being very amused at my rendition of Eliza singing "Just You Wait 'Enry 'Higgins, and how pleased I was to gain her approval. Jose's approval was not all that easily come by, and therefore very satisfying to achieve.

Grooming was another area of interest, with Jose stressing to us the importance of self-presentation and hygiene. "Shiny hair, shiny teeth shiny shoes, and uniform pressed neatly...it says so much about you, dears."

Jose seemed to have boundless energy and I never recalled seeing her weary or even slightly fazed. She seemed to be into everything! There were sports like tennis in which we would see her participate energetically with her skirt modestly hitched up, as well as her organisational skills with Combined Sports. Academically, I remember her passion for Maths and Science, enthusiastically embracing Prof. Harry Messel's Science Awards competition.

However, being a maths and science expert did not stop Jose from beginning (not STARTING: "Only horses start!") a monthly school magazine called "Influence".

Editor, publisher and printer, she was always chasing us for articles, a process she described as "pulling teeth". In hindsight I appreciate how impressive this was as Jose never taught English, but did not limit her horizons on that account, seeing the magazine as yet another way of fostering leadership.

Jose always talked about the importance of having "Character" and of the need to develop character to have a positive impact on society. She also impressed on us that we had to be responsible and reliable. No need to say that Jose herself was a strong character, strong to the point of being formidable at times.

She did not suffer fools gladly, and had that strong sense of mission and self-belief. Her vibrant faith was almost palpable and her deep love of God was infectious. She was a great fan of strong and energetic personalities like St Paul and St Augustine, her patron. "Wake up, Austen is from Augustine!"

I will never forget Jose nor the other Sisters of Charity who were to play such an important part in my formative years and fostered such wonderful ideals within us. I pray they realise how important they have been to this grateful ex-student, and I'm sure I speak for countless others.

Jose is one of the people who always springs to mind when you asked about role models. I'm sure she's giving the Lord a few pointers on how to better run Heaven, and that Heaven is just that little livlier since February 10th, 2006.

Contributed by Cathy Bosotti (Russo) Class of 1963.

## *A Conversation with Peter & Barbara Ferris*

*"It's been a great privilege.  
Half our married life, half my  
professional career, and a great  
adventure."*

For the past thirty years Peter and Barbara Ferris have been active supporters of the Sisters of Charity.

Peter, an economist and accountant, has brought his wealth of experience from the corporate world, advising the Congregation on many financial and strategic decisions, while Barbara has raised their family of six as well as volunteering for the Sisters of Charity Outreach.

Peter, who retired as a senior partner of Ernst and Young, had his first contact with the Sisters of Charity in 1976. "I was asked by Charles Curran to join St Vincent's Hospital's (Sydney) Finance Committee, and I replied "Any way I can help".

This assignment began a continuum of service through to the present, with the exception of the years 1979 to 1981 when the Ferris family was based in the U.S.A.

Peter served as a board member of St Vincent's Private Hospital and Director of Finance Committee. In 1988 he joined a steering committee to examine the future of the Sisters' health facilities, as at that time all hospitals were separate entities

As Chairman of St Vincent's Clinic from 1990-2000, Peter was largely responsible for consolidating the role of the Clinic, both as a Sisters of Charity facility, and within the Sydney medical landscape.

The formation of the Sisters of Charity Health Service in 1996 saw Peter take on the role of Deputy Chairman. Peter also served on the

Area Health Board, witnessing both the good and bad times, including the viability of some of our hospitals being called into question.

In 1997, he became the Congregation's Financial Advisor, a position Peter continues to hold today.

Asked to nominate the highlights of his time so far, Peter included the creation of the Sisters of Charity Health Service, the establishment of national committees, particularly finance, and more recently the integration of the Mater Hospital in Sydney.

Peter mentioned several of his mentors: Sister Marie Haren, Sister Administrator of St Vincent's Hospital, Sister Maria Cunningham and Sister Margaret Lee. "You learn the culture and philosophy, and participate in the spirituality. An insight into the Sisters begins by putting yourself in their shoes, and sharing their faith. Having a cup of tea with [Congregational Bursar] Sister Margaret was like having a spiritual advisor."

As the Congregation adapts to the future, Peter has assisted by looking to 2040 and beyond, ensuring that there are adequate resources to meet obligation, from food on the table to continuing the ministries of the Sisters of Charity. "Making sure the Sisters benefit from the freeing up of their responsibilities, allowing them to pursue their interests, whether it be in continued ministry, new ministry, or prayer life, their retirement is assured through prudent financial planning."

Beyond the financial dimension of the Congregation, Peter has been one of the architects of the Sponsorship plans being considered throughout the Ministries.

"The foundational principles developed in the Sisters' ministry of work, with the particular charism of service of the poor, the understanding that the lay sponsored organisations will continue with great respect to these traditions and Values. It would be a pity to see almost 200 years labour by the sisters be lost. Change will be inevitable, because change is good, but we must go forward with the best of the past.



Peter and Barbara Ferris at home in Clareville, N.S.W.

I think the sponsorship issues will be quite significant, and they have to be bedded down. One of the biggest challenges will be to find, select, recruit, form, and develop the lay people to take over. People like myself who stumbled into the Sisters in 1976, but now find ourselves with thirty years experience, are aware of the landscape, but picking the right people for the future, particularly the chairperson, is vital.

There are important differences between the directorship of a public company and directorship of a Catholic organisation. It's hard, with all the issues of compliance and adhering to good moral principles, worrying about the preservation of the mission, canon law, and being there for the Common Good rather than maximising profit.

And keep in mind that no person or no organisation can be more important than the Mission of the Sisters."

Barbara continued our conversation. "It hasn't been that hard, Peter has travelled a lot and our big family has kept us busy. So many of the Sisters have told us we are part of their family."

In fact it was Sister Margaret Lee who named

the Ferris' Clareville home "Santa Clara". The Ferris garden includes plants from St Vincent's Hospital, given when part of the Hospital's garden was demolished to make way for the new car-park.

"The children have been a great supporter of Peter, and vice versa. Our five boys and our daughter have had the opportunity to get to know the Sisters, and many family events have been shared with the Sisters. And whenever we've had problems, I know there have been many prayers flowing back our way."

"There have been so many fine women in the congregation, and working with Sister St Jude at Outreach has been inspirational. It doesn't surprise me that so many women who join Outreach as volunteers are ex-students of St Vincent's College, or ex-nurses of St Vincent's Hospital."

With their 50th wedding anniversary approaching, Peter summed up: "It's been a great privilege. Half our married life, half my professional career, and a great adventure."

*Conversation with Bruce Stephens for KIT*



Sisters Mary Cumming and Catherine Egan, two of our Irish Sisters of Charity, were recent visitors to Australia. The 40 West Street Darlinghurst Community hosted their visit.

Platinum Jubilee - 70 years

Sister Dorothy Harrison

22nd August

Diamond Jubilee - 60 years

Sisters Sarah Ryan & Jennifer Fahey

31st August

Golden Jubilees - 50 years

Sisters Margaret Galvin

Marie Henderson

Monette Mason

Joan McKenna

Ellen O'Carrigan

Patricia Scully

Mary Maguire

Patricia Nunan

16th August

Congratulation to all Jubilarians.



Think Pink! October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Please pray for our researchers working in this field.

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