



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

December 2006
Volume 7 Number 3

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



Meet "Miss Linda". For 22 years, Linda has used dance to inspire St. Columba's students. Page 3.

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Jubilees



Mr Peter Ferris, Chair of the Sisters of Charity Foundation Board (centre), with Frank and Amanda Peppard of the McGrath Foundation and their children Jasper and Scarlett, at the Blake Cottage celebrations. Share Sister Elizabeth's blessing and Frank's speech on Page 7.

Sister Agnes Kenny rsc



These words of remembrance were prepared by Sister Patricia Heenan, and delivered at the Mount Olivet Chapel on September 11th, 2006.

Today we gather to celebrate the life and death of Sister Agnes Kenny, known to many also as Sr Teresa. Last Thursday morning marked the completion of a life-history that began on 29th January, 1918, in Ryde, NSW, and the words of Jesus sum up that life - "I come to do the will of the One who sent me". That was the focus and centre of her life, summed up in the motto she chose on the day of her First Profession in 1943 - "to love and to serve God".

There are a number of people here today who can bridge her different worlds - members of her family who have joined us, Sisters who shared her religious life and who worked side by side with her in her teaching days, in her community apostolates, or in her years as Pastoral Carer; her fellow residents here in Marycrest, who knew her affectionately as Sister Kenny would, in some cases, remember when she looked after this very Chapel.

Agnes was born in 1918 to Patrick Kenny and Maud Gummer. She was the eldest of a large family. Her mother did not have good health, and Agnes took over many of the roles in the

family, caring for her younger sisters and brothers. Following her mother's death in 1939, Agnes nurtured the family and in 1941 after her father had remarried, she entered Religious Life. She had a love for all the members of her family, her brothers and sisters, her nieces and nephews, and often spoke about them. She had a special love for Jim, who became Father Bernard, and spoke about taking him to school as a new kindergarten pupil. Proud of this brother who had joined the Passionist Order and was spoken of as a dedicated religious and priest, Agnes was well enough to attend his Requiem Mass in Sydney when he died on 29th June, 2003.

In addition to teaching and leading school communities as Principal in a number of places Agnes, known then as Sister Teresa, ministered also in the Sisters of Charity Orphanage in Hobart, and as a Pastoral Carer in Lismore, Darlinghurst and here at Kangaroo Point. Agnes was very creative and artistic and a great organizer. When in Canberra she commenced a Seniors' group which was a wonderful asset to the area and which continues to this day. She was a generous tour guide to many visitors and generously drove them to see the sights of Canberra. Agnes also considered it a privilege to work for the St. Vincent de Paul Society as her father had done before her.

Agnes lived through global and historical changes she would have found hard to imagine when she was a young nun. Yet all of her many assignments had meaning for her only within her commitment as a Sister of Charity. For 63 years she remained steadfastly faithful to the constant core of who she was as an RSC, and her life had its steady focus on Jesus.

Those who lived with Agnes in Marycrest would say she lived life to the full. Severely sight-impaired, there was nevertheless a glint in the eye at the mention of Bingo sessions or the odd visit to the Broncos Club. A strong and vocal member of the Residents' Committee, joyful participant in excursions and parties - where her decorated hats for the Melbourne Cup and Mad Hatters' parties, for herself and other friends, invariably won prizes - she used her talents in craft to support any fund-raising activity for the Hospital. continues page 4

Dancing Without the Stars

For 22 years "Miss Linda" has inspired the students of St Columba's College, Essendon, to explore their creativity through dance.

When Linda Henderson joined the school, only twenty young women were dancers. Today over 350 students participate in the College's many programs, from the high-profile Rock Eisteddfod, to liturgical dances, Annual Cabaret and class lessons.

"St Columba's is a great school. It is successful in all aspects of learning, with strong values and a real connection to the outside world, and the dance program is an important part of that learning."

Linda's interest in dance started as a four-year-old when her mother took her to lessons. She learnt classical ballet before progressing to dance instruction at the Royal Academy of Dance.

"I learnt along the way it would be good for me to get people to understand that you can use dance as a tool for learning and creating. You can do lots of things with dance, and I became tired of the myth that dancing doesn't require brains!"



Linda Henderson, Head of Dance,
St Columba's College, Essendon

The wall of winners' plaques are testament to the outstanding success of St Columba's at the Rock Eisteddfod, but it is not the focus of their participation.

"It's about social accountability. We talk about our theme, discuss with the College leadership team including Principal April Honeyman, and it then grows from there. We choose a current theme that is values-based, and then if our best is good enough to win, then so be it, but it is not why we enter."

Linda explained that through dance the students learn friendship and respect. There is an emphasis on working as a team, with a deliberate choice not to create stars.

"Every student is encouraged to participate as part of a dance team. It doesn't matter what size or shape, if a girl wants to dance then she can, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I like to see them have the confidence to participate, to work hard, their minds thinking".

Within the religious calendar liturgical dance is very much a part of College life, with dance used to present Scripture. Outside the College, there are many examples of community connection, including the annual Good Friday Children's Appeal on Channel 7.

Linda acknowledges many levels of support for the dance program, including St Columba's Principal, leadership team and teachers, Sister Colleen Bell assisting with administration, as well as the tireless Columbines parent group who make costumes and build sets.

The future for dance at the College is clear and bright; participation is growing and programs expanding, creating new opportunities for students. Linda is hopeful that Aboriginal dance may be added in the near future.

"Dance is a path to many destinations... expression, confidence, awareness and respect."

Order of Australia

This year two of our Sisters received the order of Australia: Sister Pauline Staunton and Sister Jennifer Fahey.

Pauline Staunton was awarded her OAM for service to inmates and their families, staff and fellow chaplains through the N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services Chaplaincy Service.

Jennifer Fahey rsc PhD was invested in May 2006 at Government House. Her award was "for service to the Catholic education system, particularly through the establishment of professional and leadership programmes".

For ten years Sister Jennifer has taught these programmes at the University of New South Wales. These were evening courses and over and above her daytime ministry. Many of her students at a Masters level were encouraged to proceed with higher studies, and Jennifer gave generously of her time in tutorials to assist these students. A number of these students, many now in leadership positions, were responsible for Jennifer's Award nomination.

In the past twelve years Jennifer has continued to give generously of her time in a different role, that of visiting schools within the Archdiocese of Sydney. As a member of the Archdiocesan Priority Committee, Jennifer assisted in prioritizing submissions for refurbishing of schools and building of new schools. Jennifer also continues to present seminars on the topic of "self-esteem" and has lectured to trainee counsellors in TAFEs.

This year Jennifer has been invited to give conferences on topics relevant to self-concept and self-esteem in Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran schools in Canberra, Newcastle and Wollongong. Her voluntary work has included profile writing for managers in several organisations, and review of theses for students undertaking doctorate and masters studies.

The Congregational Motto "The Love of Christ Impels Us" and "Potential, though not always apparent, only needs to be invited forth" have been Jennifer's inspiration and guiding principles.

Sister Jennifer has received many congratulatory messages from her professional colleagues, students and community leaders, a testimony to the spectrum of people touched by her work. In fact Jennifer has shown many through her writings and teachings that we should rejoice in our own uniqueness. "More importantly", one professor wrote, "you showed us how to find the peace and serenity we seek...for it lies within ourselves."

Sister Agnes

She held steadfastly to her faith in the gentle strength and healing compassion of Jesus, living the words that our Foundress spoke many years ago to her sisters in times of difficulty:

"Low spirits and dread of evil in ourselves or to the Congregation, or even to the Church are the beginning of despair. If all the rest of the world goes wrong we should still persevere in trying to serve God with faith and fervour."

The proof of this faith is the way in which she lived these last months. Her involvement lessened, her strength weakened, her influence diminished, many of her family members and friends had died, and yet she remained steadfast and peace-filled and gracious.

After her death, among the personal things that held special meaning for Agnes were found these words of Cardinal Newman: "God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next."

Agnes our sister and friend can now rest from her labours, and we who are left behind can learn from her to keep our faith strong, our hope bright, our hearts honest and our desires centred in God alone. Agnes, may you rest in peace and loving embrace of God.

Human Trafficking Update

"I see a world of inequality of wealth and power. It is a world in which the poor, particularly women and children, take on the appearance of commodities, easily bought, sold and disposed of."

Sister Christine, Good Shepherd Social Justice Office, contributing to the ACRAHT Bulletin.

"The traffickers are well organised and very strong. We must be better organised and even stronger."

A Belgium Sister and member of COATNET (an international network of Religious Women Against Human Trafficking)

Sister Joan McKenna rsc of our Glenroy, Victoria community continues to take an active role in the Australian Catholic Religious Against Human Trafficking.

"The extent of human trafficking in Australia remains mostly hidden. The official figures state 300 to 400 women, mainly from Asia, are brought each year into Australia through bogus tourist visas to work in the sex trade. However we believe the correct figure is closer to 1,000 women. They are either tricked into believing they will be working in the hospitality industry, or, come to Australia knowing they will work in a brothel, but find themselves enslaved through an inescapable "work bond". Sadly very few cases come before the courts."

Reacting to the increase in trafficking, twenty Religious from several Orders including Good Samaritans, Good Shepherds and Sisters of Charity have formed an anti-trafficking group.

Sister Joan is active in the Court Watch activities, monitoring any cases that come before the courts and offering assistance for the victims. She is also co-ordinator of a bulletin that keeps members in touch with current events.

Eleven members journeyed to Canberra this year to lobby 28 politicians with connections to immigration and justice. The anti-trafficking issue is complex, but the message was clear: Australians do not want human trafficking.

The Australian group has also connected with an international network of Religious Women Against Human Trafficking called COATNET.

"I am angry at people taking advantage of poorness. Australia is a part of the worldwide trading of women into the sex industry, but if courts get their act together and people learn what it's about, we can stop it."

Other activities of the group are education through schools, parishes and communities. Beyond the sex trade, Joan points out that enslavement of workers [men and women] in unfair conditions with inadequate wages and restriction of movement is another form of trafficking that is now being seen in Australia.

For Joan, involvement with the group has been a steep learning curve. "One difference is we don't actually meet the victims, so we are working for them and not with them. And looking at the bigger picture, the women are all attempting to create a better life for their families, but if you don't give them another way of working there will always be people who will victimise them."

If you would like to learn more about Australian Catholic Religious Against Human Trafficking, email Joan at joanmcke@alphalink.com.au or write to her at the Glenroy Community.

Joan also suggests this web site - www.goodshepherd.com.au/justice/trafficking



A Conversation with Michael Doyle

"It's now your turn to work for me." These were the words that greeted Professor Michael Doyle when he took on the Chair of Melbourne-based Community Care following an invitation from our former Congregational Leader, Sister Annette Cunliffe. Annette had worked for Michael at the Australian Catholic University, and upon his retirement as Dean of Education, Michael gladly accepted the challenge. This was not the first time Michael had assisted the Congregation in a leadership role, having previously chaired the Catholic Ladies College Board during his daughters' attendance at Eltham.

"What I have found most attractive about Community Care has been the Sisters in charge of the programs. They are so wonderful, so generous and so hospitable, always sharing their love with the people. We are entrusted that the Mission of the Sisters, their values as well as the direction and quality of their programs continue."

Community Care offers a diverse range of services throughout Victoria, and as of July this year, extending their services to Devonport in Tasmania.

Two services focus on "Care for Carers". In the Broadmeadows area, a support service for carers provides much needed resources and networking, while at Healesville, Community Care has converted a former Congregation retreat into a comfortable six room respite centre,

providing an affordable and often much-needed break for carers in an empathetic surrounding.

In the surrounds of St Vincent's Hospital, Briar Terrace bungalow is a drop-in centre for isolated over-60s in Fitzroy.

At Castlemaine, the recently relocated Blake Cottage continues the Sisters' Prison Ministry, offering hospitality to prisoners' families in a non-judgemental home setting, focused on keeping families together.

In July, following the closure of St Vincent's Hospital Launceston, Community Care took responsibility for the management and structure of the Sisters of Charity Devonport Counselling Service.

"The modern poor are the mentally ill, the depressed and the lonely, and I am very happy with the programs we have. In the same way that the Sisters' Hospitals and Schools are structured and funded, we must build a strong kernel to continue the Mission in welfare."

Forward planning for a continuing Mission characterises many of the services. For example a lay person has just been appointed to run Briar Cottage, and Blake Cottage has been designed to be run by a couple at a time in the future when the Sisters choose to pass on that role. Further, the Board is seeking enduring partnerships with other community groups to ensure sustainable and funded structures are in place for the future. "As far as the Board, we're just the oil. The engine is the Sisters who work within the services. They are empathetic, Christ-centred, and give an amazing depth of care. And through their discerning choices, they know what is truly needed."



{From left} Mr Phil Spry-Bailey, Prof. Michael Doyle, Sister Patricia Noonan and Ms Margaret Healy working as a staff selection sub-committee at Community Care's Essendon office.

Blake Cottage

On September 14th, the new Blake Cottage was opened in Castlemaine. Here are the Scripture reading, Sister Elizabeth's Homily and address by Mr Frank Peppard of the McGrath Foundation. The McGrath Foundation, through the Sisters of Charity Foundation, contributed \$100,000 to the Cottage.

The Word of God Luke 24:28-30 *The Road to Emmaus*

"When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them saying 'It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at the table, he took the bread and said the blessing, then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he had vanished from their sight."

Sister Elizabeth's Homily:

"This extract from the Gospel of life is quite extraordinary. You will be aware that this journey took place after the resurrection of Jesus when some disciples were on their way to the town of Emmaus.

They came across a stranger and began chatting as we do during long dusty journeys. They felt attracted to the stranger but did not know that it was Jesus until they offered hospitality.

This house, Blake Cottage, which we bless and open today is both a home and a ministry of the Sisters of Charity. This is both a home and

a ministry where we as Sisters of Charity hope that all who come here will experience new life.

New life comes to us in welcoming the stranger, in offering hospitality in breaking bread, sharing a meal and in blessing each other.

We, Community Care, the McGrath Family, VACRO personnel, this parish, BE and DO the Good News. We follow the example of Jesus: We stand up for life, love, justice. We stand with: support with action, not just words. We stand behind: aware of God's presence and power. We are called to make a difference in the world. No excuses."

Mr Peppard's Address:

"Every time I am in the company of the Sisters, their calmness, their empathy, practicality, fearlessness, their energy and love astounds me. These remarkable gifts Sisters Maria and Pam share with people here at Blake Cottage, or anyone they contact.

Seeing first hand the Mission here and really witnessing God's work, that is all too rarely seen.

My family, through the McGrath Foundation, are thrilled to be helping in a very small way the Sisters achieve their Mission, and I'm sure Blake Cottage will become a model for similar centres elsewhere.

Much like the Sisters who arrived in Sydney Harbour 168 years ago to an unknown land, today's Sisters continue with innovation that we see here on this very site, and bravely embrace the formation of future sponsorships.

I wish Sister Elizabeth and the Congregation the best for this new journey."

Continuing our Prison Ministry.
Sister Elizabeth unveils the name plaque at the new Blake Cottage in Castlemaine, Victoria.



New Pathways

Give Glory to God in the Highest...
And Peace to God's People on Earth!

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FOR 2006

I am firmly convinced that Christmas is about faith and giving. Not the gifts we give, but the gift that firmly links the divinity of the ultimate Giver with our fragile humanity and the faith that links this extraordinary encounter.

This Christmas our fragile humanity needs the gifts of peace, justice, mercy, transformation and freedom more than ever. Each of these gifts is wrapped in the Gospel imperative of love, so valued by every Sister of Charity.

Let us pray for the gift of peace to fill the hearts of those engaged in sectarian violence throughout the landscape into which Christ himself was born.

Let us pray for justice and the restoration of human rights to those whose liberty has been removed by unjust structures and processes such as Guantanamo Bay and immigration detention. Let us pray that David Hicks is brought back to Australia.

Let us pray for mercy for those whose view of the world regards the ultimate sacrifice as that which takes innocent life in suicide bombings.

Let us pray for the transformation of political systems that suppress democracy and the freedom of speech.

Christmas also celebrates the continuity of life. I have become very conscious of this watching communities such as those in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania as, like gold, humankind and other species are tested in fire yet again.

Let us pray in a very personal way that endurance, strength, patience and resilience be bestowed upon those who are threatened by the ever-present fire storms.

Let us pray for those defending property, supporting workers and volunteers and linking communities through communications networks.

I wish you the peace and joy of Christmas that is beyond all understanding. May your giving glory to God in the highest bring peace to God's people on earth.

Elizabeth rsc
Congregational Leader

January Jubilees

On Tuesday 9th January, Sr Marie Stanley, Sr Moira O'Sullivan and Sr Jacinta Fong will celebrate their Golden Jubilee.

On 25th January Sr Josephine Cannell will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee with a thanksgiving Eucharist in the Chapel of Mt Carmel College, 7 Quorn Street, Sandy Bay at 2pm.

On Sunday 28th January Sr M Bernadette Shand will be celebrating her Diamond Jubilee at Giovanni Chapel, Mount Olivet, Kangaroo Point at 2pm.

Congratulation to all Jubilarians.

KEEP IN TOUCH is published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.
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