



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

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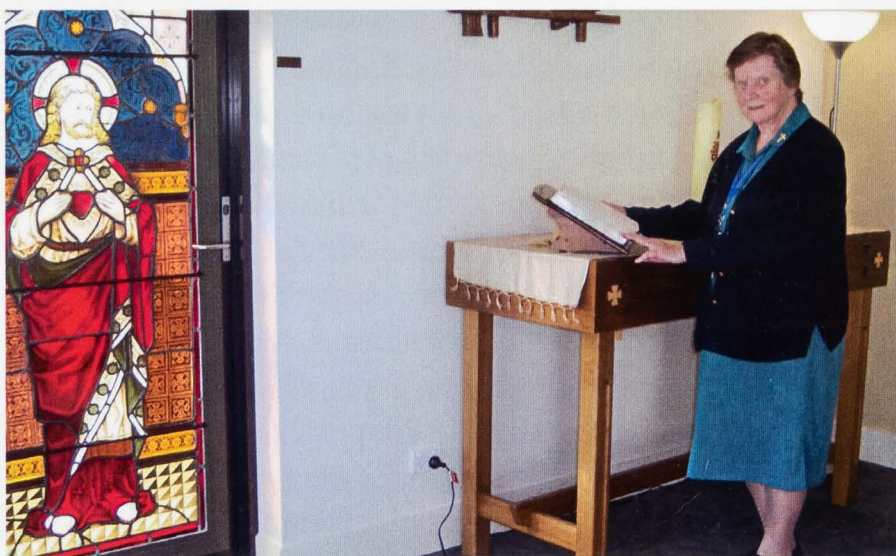
A newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families and friends, and supporters of our Congregation

Celebrating Pastoral Care at St Vincent's Health Melbourne

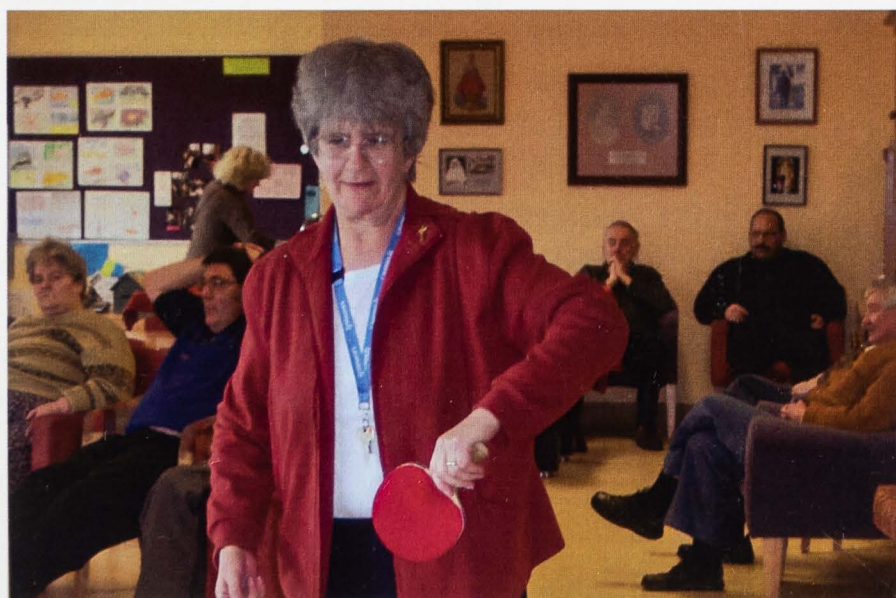


Sisters of Charity were an integral part of the Pastoral Care Week celebrations at St Vincent's Health Melbourne. Pastoral Care week is celebrated internationally, and gives an opportunity to acknowledge the care and support provided by Pastoral Carers to patients and their families.

A powerful presentation prepared for the celebrations by the St Vincent's Health Pastoral Care team cited The World Health Organisation definition of "health" as "a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".



As for the Spiritual dimension, the team proclaimed "Spirituality is that which connects us to other people, nature and the source of life, and helps us transcend and embrace life situations. Spirituality can help an individual make sense of their lives and find a purpose for living. Spirituality and religion are critical sources of strength for many patients, and can be a key factor in promoting health and well-being."



Our Sisters are part of the team which provides Pastoral Care throughout the facilities of St Vincent's Health Melbourne.

From top to bottom:

- 1. Srs Margaret Laffan, Mary Fankhauser, Marie Bernadette Wunsch at St Vincent's Hospital*
- 2. Sr. Eileen Thynne preparing chapel for Mass at Caritas Christi, Kew*
- 3. Sr. Joan Stapleton versus a resident in the Prague House Recreation Room*

Jubilees

Elizabeth Costigan rsc



Cutting the magnificently decorated cake



Sister Elizabeth at Catholic Ladies College, Eltham



From L-R: Sisters Leone Wittmack, Linda Ferrington, Elizabeth Costigan, Annette Cunliffe and Maria Cunningham

On Sunday, August 5, 2007, we celebrated Sister Elizabeth Costigan's Golden Jubilee with a gathering of many family and friends at CLC College, Eltham.

Celebrants at the Mass were Father Champion Murray OFM and Fr Steele Hartmann OCSO. Thanks to Margaret McKenna and the CLC staff, we were welcomed to the CLC hall, magnificently decorated for the occasion, and following the Mass, were provided with a beautifully catered lunch. Members of the staff also took photos and a video for those who were unable to be with us for the celebration. In addition to Elizabeth's family and many Sisters of Charity there were present friends from the various places where Elizabeth has ministered over the past 50 years. Also present were friends from her own schooldays at CLC and some who had journeyed with her for some years as a Sister of Charity in their early years. It was a great reunion for Elizabeth with so many who had been part of her years as a

student, as a teacher, and as a Sister of Charity. In his homily, Fr Champion spoke of the meaning of religious profession in our pluralist society. He spoke of the calling of Mary, the mother of God, whose life did not appear to her neighbours as remarkable, yet before God she is more than famous and all of us know her influence in our lives. He said, "The effect of an event does not depend on how many people know about it or even what people think about it. This is as true for today's ceremony as it was for the life of Mary, the mother of God. If we believe in God then we believe that God is fulfilling a plan for the world... God keeps working whether or not we are aware of God." Fr Champion went on to say that the jubilee ceremony highlights the reality of God, the significance of God for us and for the world. All of us who try to find our way in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society are encouraged and inspired by people whose lives give witness to a belief in the place of God in every aspect of our lives. He concluded by



Sister Elizabeth with Sister Lauren Dixon rsc

congratulating and thanking Elizabeth for the witness she gives to us and to the world today. After the meal, Elizabeth's brother, Michael Costigan spoke on behalf of the family and recalled many incidents from her family and schooldays.

As he mentioned each of the family he poignantly reminded us that that day was the fifth anniversary of Peter's death. Michael remembered Elizabeth as not being part of the 'rough and tumble' of the big family, but as a kind and gentle Carlton supporter...adding that this is indeed an oxymoron!

In her reply, Elizabeth spoke and thanked her family, her community, and all Sisters of Charity and friends who had been part of her journey. She especially thanked those who had enabled the celebration to take place in the College which had been such an important part of her life. Many memories were revived for her as she saw so many who had touched her life in those 50 years, and she was very conscious of Sisters Kath Fanning and Ann Conway who were sharing this celebration in a special way. She concluded with the words of St Paul: "I thank my God for you every time I think of you, and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy, because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel. You are always in my heart".

Kindly contributed by Margaret Dwyer rsc

Antonita Duthy rsc

On the 22nd August, 2007, Sister Antonita Duthy rsc celebrated her Diamond Jubilee.

A low-key community Mass became a joyful community celebration. Father Ron Hickman prepared a special Mass of "Renewal of Vows", with Sister Antonita renewing her vows to the delight of the Cardinal Gilroy Village Community.

This was followed by a high afternoon tea prepared by generous helpers. One of the highlights was the cutting of the beautiful cake, made and decorated by Sister Judith Clark rsc.

Sisters of Charity, ex-students and Theresians from Cathedral, Auburn, Potts Point, Ashfield and Liverpool schools "came out of the woodwork." All were singing the praises and recalling memories of their younger years with Antonita and the Sisters of Charity.



Sister Antonita cuts the beautiful cake, made and decorated by Sister Judith Clark rsc

Claire Nolan Scholarship 2007

Maria Condello is a member of the Pastoral Care Team at St Joseph's Hospital Auburn, and was the recipient of the "Claire Nolan Scholarship" in 2007. Maria is undertaking a Masters of Arts in Theological Studies at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, Strathfield.

KIT: What were you able to achieve over the last year as a Claire Nolan Scholar?

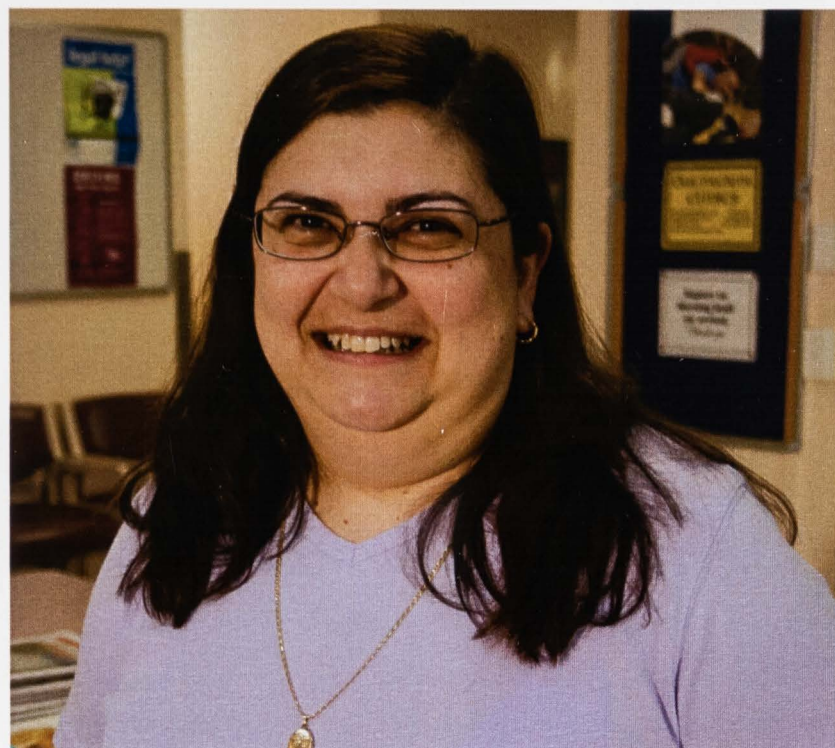
I was able to undertake four subjects in my degree, instead of just two subjects. They were units in Synoptic Gospels, The Church, New Images and Models of Mission, and Faith, Mission and Culture.

Being awarded the Scholarship also allowed me to purchase some very valuable books to create a professional library relating to my subjects, and these will be available to others in the Pastoral Care department. Without the scholarship, I wouldn't have been able to make those acquisitions.

KIT: When you were awarded the Scholarship, you said you wanted to "explore the Gospels more completely". Tell us about that experience.

My studies in the Synoptic Gospels have opened my eyes. When you go to Church each week you hear the Word being broken open, but this enabled me to hear things about the context, climate and culture that these books were written in... that we in this century forget sometimes. When you study with this in mind, you pick up key points that sometimes we miss. I always had a sense that the Mission of Jesus was for everybody, but as I explored the missiology subjects, I realised that the view of "taking the Mission where it hadn't been heard" was only one component. I've developed a passion for seeing Mission as everything we do, in every encounter that we have. Mission is so crucial to what we do within our Church and our Faith. Every interaction, being present to bring the word of God and the examples of Jesus to people in the way that we work with people and are there for people.

KIT: Maria, what will you take from this year to your work as a Pastoral Carer here at St Joseph's?



Maria Condello, Claire Nolan Scholar 2007

I can share what I've learnt with my colleagues in many ways. For example, in the prayer groups that we run, many of which are based on Scripture. As a team we often talk about our role as Pastoral Carers and that it is the Mission, and I feel I have a better base of knowledge to draw on, and sometimes present an alternative view.

With our patients, we may be having communion, where we often reflect on the Gospels: I can bring out some of the meaning for them, giving something they can use in their life.

KIT: Your final reflection on the Scholarship?

I would say that the Scholarship is a wonderful way of opening up doors that may otherwise remain closed. It has enabled a scope of imagination that sometimes is limited. For me it has been a great honour to follow in Sister Claire's footsteps. So many people talk of the essence, the Spirit and the passion that she had for Health. It's opened up doors in myself to follow that passion.

Maria acknowledged the wonderful support she received during the year from the Pastoral Care Team at St Joseph's, particularly Sister Carmel Muir sm. Maria will study four more units, completing her degree by the end of 2009.

Claire Nolan Scholar 2008 announced.

The 2008 recipient of the Claire Nolan Scholarship has been announced. The successful applicant is Ms Gaye Moore from St George's Hospital, Melbourne. Gaye is currently undertaking her PhD at the University of Melbourne's School of Nursing. Gaye's thesis is "Assessing risk factors and service needs for homelessness: Perspectives of homeless people and health service providers".

The selection panel commented: "The candidate, having worked for the organisation for a number of years is committed and has aligned herself with the values and mission as well as addressing all of the five Values of the Sisters of Charity in her excellent application.

The study she has completed for her doctoral work around the homeless is significant and as the funds awarded are designed to take study further, this will allow her to take the model of risk assessment of the homeless to a national level. Given the importance of this topic within the organisation nationally, we feel it is worthy of such a scholarship".

A Hand to the Land

Once again the Sisters of Charity have come together to raise much-needed funds for rural families.

In this letter to Sister Kerry Barrass from Mr Peter Barry, St Vincent de Paul, Warren, NSW, the practicality of their gift was clearly evident:

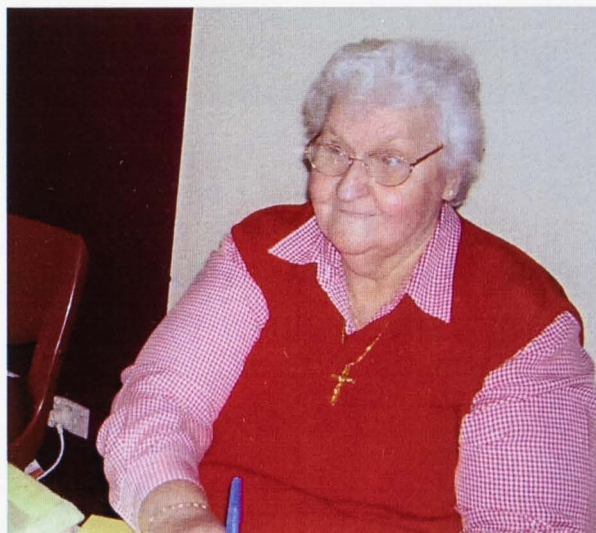
Dear Sister Kerry

Nice to have a chat to you on Saturday and expressly extra nice to be advised of you and the ladies fund raising effort of \$2,500.

Vinnies assisted a family with a cheque to help pay for fuel expenses in their travels to and fro for the cancer treatment.

Look forward to your next visit to Warren, so keep well and sincere thanks to you and all your helpers who generously donate their time and money to help out those less fortunate in the rural sector.

*Best regards,
Peter Barry*



Sister Kerry Barrass



Sister Ellen O'Carrigan and Sister Edith King



*Helping raise money for rural families in crisis;
Sister Maureen Heffernan and Sister Gaye Reynolds*

The Mission Continues: *Sudanese Refugees*



Sister Philippine Humphreys with a student from St John's Primary School, Auburn

Sisters of Charity have been present in the care of some of the thousands of Sudanese refugees that have made their “sea crossing” to Australia.

At Miller, in Sydney's western suburbs, Sister Elizabeth Wall assists with the Sisters of Charity Outreach Parent Support Programme, where Sudanese mothers and their children join in the activities.

At Wentworthville, also in Sydney's west, Sister Jean Montgomery rsc has helped with outreach to 15 Sudanese families. Initially, food and clothing drives ensured the provision of basic necessities, and a full program of home visitation, transport assistance and educational support has followed this. Through funding provided by the Sisters of Charity Foundation, childcare places have been secured at TAFE.

At Ashfield, Sister Aileen Thomas rsc has provided emergency accommodation, text books, school uniforms and assistance in completing the myriad of forms that confront refugees. Sisters Jean Marie Brennan rsc and Eileen Browne rsc have helped with English classes in the All Saints parish.

In Launceston, Sister Dorothy Bayliss has worked at the Migrant Resource Centre assisting refugees not only from Sudan, but Ethiopia, Liberia, Ghana and Kenya.

Sister Dorothy set up a “Friends of Refugees” volunteer group from the St Vincent de Paul Parish.

In Toowoomba, where over 1,000 Sudanese refugees have settled, Sister Maureen Parker rsc works with Outreach to provide transport for refugees to medical services, TAFE, Centrelink and shopping. Outreach has assisted with students pursuing a place at University, and there is a full calendar of cultural awareness activities Bereavement counselling is also provided to Sudanese families.

Here is a detailed account from Sister Genevieve Walsh rsc of her work with students at St John's Primary, Auburn, N.S.W.

“The process of being uprooted from one culture and transported to another is one of the most stressful, traumatic and challenging experiences anyone can live through. Over the past few years over 120 refugee students from many parts of Africa, but mostly from southern Sudan, have come to St John's Primary School, Auburn. Most of these children have not had any previous schooling and have suffered much trauma. Their behaviour was characterised by violent outbursts, poor concentration and hyperactivity.

As a Sister of Charity, I walk with many of these students and their families. I am a member of the Pastoral Care Team at St John's whose Principal and staff work tirelessly to ease the settling-in process for these people. Together we not only value their culture, gifts and talents but know that it is a privilege to walk with them, supporting them in their many and diverse needs.

We have implemented many programmes, including “Settling-In” and “Grief and Trauma” for students between the ages of five and twelve years. There are also student assistant reading programmes, conversation classes for parents and a playgroup to assist with preparation for school life. We provide uniforms and free tuition, all offered with respect for the recipient's pride and dignity.

An immunisation clinic has been set up on-site, and this has led to the introduction of health programmes in the classes. Other supportive action includes home visitation, transportation of families and students in need, intensive English classes for students preparing to graduate to high school, as well as parent meetings to discuss any school issue. Many agencies are accessed in order to provide suitable and appropriate support, with the Catholic Education Office in Sydney assisting with this coordination.

With a Sudanese elder on staff, we are able to listen to the hearts of these people. We are able to walk with them in their cries and dreams. This year we have seen a remarkable improvement in the children's behaviour and learning. Mary Aikenhead would have been delighted with our school community as we daily walk wherever the Sudanese people lead us. Caritas Christi urget nos."

Pilgrimages

The fifth day of November holds a special significance for Sisters of Charity, when departed members, founders and benefactors are commemorated.

Following the visit to Cornelian Bay as part of the 150th Tasmanian Celebrations, other pilgrimages were made in November, 2007.

Sister Margaret Mines rsc led simple liturgies at Nudgee Cemetery, Brisbane and Drayton. Sister Maureen Walters rsc led a liturgy at Melbourne General Cemetery, with Sisters Libbey Byrne rsc and Virginia Wilkinson rsc leading a liturgy at Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery.



Sister Judith (top left) with Ward Grandparent Program team members, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne

Sister Judith Christy recognised by Royal Children's Hospital

Sister Judith Christy rsc has been recognised by the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne for her volunteer work in the Ward Grandparent Program, run by the Hospital's Social Work department.

The program assigns a volunteer to a child until he or she returns home, is transferred to a hospital closer to their home...or they go to Heaven.

The volunteers work closely with a Social Worker, and meet as a group once a month with the Social Work team.

Sister Judith spends three days a week at the Children's Hospital, from 9.30 am to 3 pm, and she has contributed over 1,500 hours of service.



President of The Royal Children's Hospital Volunteer Service, Mrs Nola Horne with Sister Judith

Building on our History... Expanding our Horizons

St Vincent's Hospital, Brisbane



Present at the ground-breaking ceremony: From L-R: Srs Mary Goss, Nola Riley, Maria Carmel Cullen, Maureen Delaney, Jan O'Grady and Carmel Coyle, rsc, joined by Srs Bernadette Edgcombe SSps and Kathleen Collins SSps

On the morning of Tuesday 19 February 2008 a gathering took place at Mt Olivet Hospital, which is situated on the cliffs overlooking the Brisbane River. All present had come, because of past, present or future connections with the hospital.

The proceedings began with a welcome by Daniele Doyle, General Manager of Mt Olivet Hospital. Sr Maureen Delaney, Congregational Councillor then reminded us of the sacred space we were in and an Acknowledgement of Country. An overview of the hospital's redevelopment plans was given by Daniele Doyle, who began by recognising the commitment of the Sisters of Charity and the community. The major upgrade and extension will create a general medical hospital of excellence, specialising in the area of general medicine, gerontology, palliative care, rehabilitation and other specialist programs focusing on chronic disease management.

Towards the end of the year, when the \$35 m first phase of redevelopment is completed, the hospital will be renamed St Vincent's Hospital Brisbane to reflect the name used by the other Sisters of Charity hospitals. Sr Maureen then spoke about the story of Mt Olivet, which has an incredible amount of community support and has been created thanks to the generous commitment of women and men who have tendered the sick and dying, ministering with the sisters across the years with compassion and care – a care which continues and which has always



An artist's impression of the first stage of the new St Vincent's Hospital Brisbane

welcomed people of all creeds and circumstances. Sr Maureen identified some significant women in this story.

- Miss Mary Bedford - her bequest of land, in 1952 to commemorate the life work of Dr Lillian Cooper, the first woman doctor in Queensland
- Sr Giovanni Ackmann - who established Mt Olivet and her tremendous fundraising efforts
- Sister Administrators across the years - Mother Magdalen Burke, Sr Julian Pearson and Sr Nola Riley. Sr Nola was present and her contribution was acknowledged by spontaneous applause.

Sr Maureen then spoke on behalf of Sr Elizabeth Dodds, the Congregational Leader: "...We Sisters of Charity have been with you in this wonderful complex from its beginnings in 1952; we are with you today in 2008; and we will continue to be with you for as long as we are able into the future"...

Archbishop Bathersby was then invited to ask God's blessing on the healthcare ministry and he also prayed for the success of the building program and for those who will be nurtured within its walls.

Sr Maureen's words are a fitting thought on the occasion of this significant event, which we have witnessed: 'May our Provident God provide what is needed for healthcare in this state.'

Kindly contributed by Anne Taylor rsc



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