



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

2009 Claire Nolan Memorial Scholar



Andrea Smith in the Caritas Christi Creative Arts room with Therese McCarthy

Therese McCarthy, of Caritas Christi Hospice, Kew, has been awarded this year's Claire Nolan Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship honours the life of Sister Claire (RIP February 6th, 2005). The funds from the award will support Therese in her Graduate Diploma in Counselling as well as a Graduate Diploma in Theology through the Melbourne College of Divinity.

"The multidisciplinary team at Caritas has a real desire to ensure the patients, and their families, who come to the hospice have the best possible care. And this is in fact what happens because we have a very cohesive team. Due to the nature of the work, each day is unpredictable for the pastoral care staff. The study offers an opportunity to reflect on what we do. The nature of suffering and the way it changes us is of particular interest. Suffering is difficult but inevitable

for all of us, and one of the amazing things about suffering is the qualities it evokes. Every day at Caritas, staff are privileged to witness courage, faithfulness, deep tireless love, forgiveness and healing in the lives of the patients and their loved ones. Of course it's not easy – there is much sadness, sometimes pain, and a myriad of complex emotions, but Grace abounds most obviously where people are vulnerable, and the staff are changed because we are part of the process of transformation."

Caritas Christi also offers patients and their families the Pastoral Care Creative Arts program. "Much of what is experienced by patients and loved ones during the dying process is often beyond words, especially in the initial stages. Sometimes people might be unable to speak about what is happening, but they can paint a design on pottery, or put fingerprints to form a butterfly

on a tile of memory, as an image of transformation and new life. This can offer inroads into the story of the dying person's life.

Therese's study in 2009 includes units on Counselling Practice; Understanding Grief and Loss; Human and Faith Developmental stages, as well as a trip to New Norcia WA, to explore Benedictine Prayer and Hospitality.

"The Sisters of Charity are an amazing group of women, and were pioneers in Hospice Care. Caritas Christi staff ensure the vision of the Sisters continues, in providing patients and their loved ones with care and support during what is a very precious time for them during their stay at the Hospice. All of us are proud to be carrying on the work of Sister Claire and the Congregation."



Therese McCarthy



After the session during the Orientation - "Immersion as Experienced by 3 Wise Women" with Clare, Kerrie and Katie who have spent time in Zambia



Members of the Congregational Leadership Team with the GAP Participants after the Sending Forth
Standing - Sr Annette Cunliffe, Clare Christie, Sr Libbey Byrne
Seated - Rebecca Hyland, Megan Gaffney, Roslyn Hiser, Sr Teresita Marcello



The GAP Participants and Companions at "Currajeen"



At Comely Bank, Healesville having lunch after helping Srs Colleen McDonald (standing) and Joan McKenna rsc (seated third from left)



After the Sending Forth with Srs Patricia Heenan, Margaret Costigan, Dorothy Bayliss and Leone Wittmack rsc



The Hyland Family after the Sending Forth Ceremony

The Sisters Of Charity Pilot Gap Experience Is Happening!

In a moving Sending Forth Ceremony on 22nd February 2009 four young women and three Sisters of Charity began the final preparations for their Gap Experience. The ceremony was attended by families, the Congregational Leader and two of the Councillors, and representatives of the communities of St Columba's and Catholic Ladies' Colleges.

How did the Sisters of Charity GAP Experience Program begin? In mid April 2008, four Sisters of Charity met in Sydney to look at the possibility of a Gap experience for young women. It was

recommended that it happen in 2009 and that the places selected would be Zambia and a suburb of London, Hackney. At this initial meeting we brain stormed what such a venture might offer to the participants and the Congregation. This provided the foundation on which the ensuing program was developed. Our work received substantial support and affirmation from the General Chapter of the Congregation in October 2008. It has offered to many sisters a sign of hope and possibilities for the future.

Because this is a pilot program the promotion and selection was narrowed to make it possible. The Year 12 students in the Sisters of Charity Colleges were informed and invited to participate. There were a number of expressions of interest and in October five young women in Melbourne from Catholic Ladies College and St Columba's lodged their applications.

Also in October three sisters were invited to be Gap Companions, two to accompany the young women to Zambia for three months and then travel with them to London, where another sister will companion them for the remaining three months. The hosts in Zambia and Hackney will decide where the Gap participants and companions will be working and living in community.

When the GAP Companions met with the Committee on 20 November 2008 a text from Isaiah formed the basis for our reflection.

*Make your tent bigger; stretch it out and make it wider.
Do not hold back.
Make the ropes longer and its stakes stronger,
Because you will spread out to the right and to the left . . .*
Isaiah 54:2-3 (New Century Version)

This passage has become a focal point for us.

The GAP Experience Orientation Program was designed to enable the participants and companions to reflect on and develop understandings related to moving beyond day to day 'comfort zones'. The overall program included an understanding of the mission of the Sisters of Charity, developing cross-cultural understanding, health issues, interpersonal skills and the opportunity to experience local Sisters of Charity ministries.

The experience began with the first part of the Orientation Program on 12 December 2008 at West Preston. The committee hosted a day for all involved to meet and start the process of getting to know each other. The program included live-in weekends in February at "Currajeen", Doreen, field work in various Sisters of Charity ministries, a group field day at Comely Bank Healesville, after the Victorian bushfires and the sending forth ceremony.

On Wednesday 3 March 2009 at Tullamarine International airport we farewelled Rebecca Hyland, Roslyn Hiser, Clare Christie,

Megan Gaffney and Sisters Anne Taylor and Colleen Jackson. They arrived in Lusaka and were warmly welcomed by the Zambian Sisters at their regional house.

After a few days of rest and familiarisation with Zambia each of the four has been sent to a different location: Roma, in Lusaka, where there is a school run by the Zambian Sisters; Chikuni, a village in the Southern Province of Zambia, 30 km from nearest town; Monze, with the Chikuni Mission, a poor rural area; and Maamba, a small town 75 miles from Choma where coal was discovered in 1967. In early June the Gap participants will move to Hackney in the east end of London. Here they will volunteer at St Joseph's Hospice, which the Sisters of Charity established over 100 years ago and also in the parish of Canning Town.

Throughout the Gap Experience there will be opportunities for participants and companions to spend time together so that they are able to reflect upon their experiences.

At the conclusion of the six months, after some travel, there will be time for debriefing and recommendations for future Gap experiences. Please keep the young women, their companion Sisters and the whole Gap Experience Program in your prayers.

*Margaret Costigan, RSC
13 March 2009*

Jubilee Celebrations

Platinum Jubilee

Sister Honorata Scanlon rsc



Sister Honorata cuts her Jubilee cake supported by Sister Tess

On Sunday, February 1st, our Taroom community saluted two inspiring milestones in Sister M. Honorata's long and impressive life. We combined the celebration of her Platinum Jubilee with that of her 92nd birthday and invited her family and a few friends from her nursing days to attend.

About thirty-two family members attended, ranging from her elderly brothers, Patrick and Terry, through to her great-great-grand-nephews, Lachlan and Dylan. A small group of loyal friends who had nursed with "Honnie" in Launceston also travelled down to congratulate her on these great achievements. It was quite obvious that they viewed her with great affection and held her in high regard.

Also honouring us with their presence were Archbishop Adrian Doyle, Father Michael Tate, our parish priest, Sister Teresita Marcelo, Sister Patricia Heenan, Liz Reid, and Joyce and David Cumming, who are the caretakers at Grange Villas and valued friends of our sisters.

We were particularly pleased that Tess, Patricia and Liz Reid could be with us to enjoy the occasion and also to enhance the RSC flavour!

Our hearts were warmed at the obvious joy of her family members, many of whom thanked us for organising such a joy-filled occasion for them to meet

Diamond Jubilee

Sister Colleen Bell rsc



Colleen on her Jubilee day

Colleen Bell's celebration of her Diamond Jubilee was held at 53 Washington Street, Essendon, on the 28th January, the actual date of her Religious Profession.

Her community and a few personal friends joined her for the celebration of the Eucharist at 10am in our little Chapel during which celebration she renewed her vows and received the Papal Blessing. The celebrants were her friends, Fathers Gary Walker and Bernie McDermott - Columban priests who frequently celebrate Mass for us here in our chapel.

After Mass, all enjoyed a special morning tea where Colleen cut and shared her Jubilee Cake.

Colleen wishes to thank the Sisters for their kind wishes, prayers and gifts on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee.

together and to honour "such an amazing woman".

Particularly inspiring was the loving support they provided each other, so that even the sad news of the death of Sister Honorata's niece, Kathleen Boyle, who died on her way from Victoria to join in the celebrations, could not overshadow the happiness of the gathering.

Diamond Jubilee Sister Margaret Cooney rsc



Margaret on her Jubilee celebration

On 28th January 2009 at 10 am in St Joseph's Village Chapel, Auburn, we rejoiced with Sr Margaret as she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, marking 60 years of service and commitment as a Sister of Charity.

Sister Elizabeth Byrne welcomed all present to the prayerful and meaningful Eucharist celebrated to commence the Day. Sister Margaret was delighted for the opportunity to express her gratitude to God for the 60 years at the Eucharist.

The motto of all Sisters of Charity is "the love of Christ urges us on". At Profession, each Sister chooses a personal motto and in her motto Sister Margaret chose to reflect the thoughts of the Congregational motto in her choice of "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee".

Margaret's ministry over those years has been mainly in Education but since her arrival as a Resident of St Joseph's Village, her ministry has been continued in her fidelity to prayer, her selflessness and her evident concern for all people associated with St Joseph's Village.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was beautifully arranged and the meticulous preparations for the Day were evident in the Chapel experience, the delicious Morning Tea and the time for personal reflection during the afternoon period. The bestowal of the blessing from Pope Benedict XVI by Sister Annette,

the Congregational Leader, is Margaret's personal memento of the Day.

Margaret's family members, the Sisters of Charity present, including the Congregational Leader, Sr Annette Cunliffe, her Vicar, Sr Laureen Dixon, Councillors Srs Elizabeth Byrne and Gaye Reynolds and her friends welcomed this day to let Margaret know how much her 60 years of commitment have meant to her God and us. I conclude with the words of the Opening Hymn - "May Christ be our Light, Shine in our hearts, through any darkneses and in the Church today".

The Sisters Of Charity Ex-students' and Friends' Association

This Association which commenced in 1982, will be winding up in 2009 after 27 years. There was a meeting of the committee on 14th March to finalise all the matters concerned with the Association.

The committee has worked hard over these years, raising approximately \$50,000 towards various projects of the Sisters of Charity - in later years, making Outreach the recipient of their fund-raising.

As well as making money, this committee provided opportunities for ex-students of schools formerly conducted by the Sisters of Charity, to meet school friends from time to time.

"We want to show our gratitude to the Sisters who unselfishly shaped us in our young lives and who continue to support and encourage us to this day."

Eulogies

Mary Felix Thorburn
2.12.2008



Elizabeth Magdalen Thorburn was born in Lismore in 1919. She undertook her basic nurse training in Toowoomba, completing it in 1945. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity in 1946, and on profession took the name Sister Mary Felix.

Following theatre experience in Auburn, Bathurst and Lismore, she then completed her Midwifery at St Vincent's Maternity in Melbourne. The Sisters of Charity obviously had plans for her future in the operating theatre, and with great forethought sent her to the College of Nursing Australia to study for a Diploma of Theatre Management.

On completion of this, the theatre suite at St. Vincent's Melbourne beckoned, and became her domain for the next quarter of a century. Sister Mary Felix took over the operating theatres at St Vincent's Melbourne 1955.

Felix, ever the professional, instilled a high standard of discipline among doctors, nurses and allied health personnel. One important aspect of Felix's management style that deserves mention is her absolute support of her staff. No matter whether right or wrong, she always supported us.

In this era of rapid progress, the sharing of information was seen to be of great importance, and together with other theatre supervisors she, and June Allen, from the Royal Melbourne Hospital convened the first professional meeting of theatre Sisters here in Victoria in 1957. The organisation

flourished, and Sister Felix served on the executive and committee for many years.

Each month Felix would round up we theatre nurses, to attend the theatre Sisters' meeting. This monthly meeting rotated around the inner city hospitals. Sister hosted the committee meetings at St Vincent's for years. She provided supper for the members, from the hospital Kitchen. As Sister Maureen commented did her Sister Superior know? Probably not!

Other ancillary organisations who were the beneficiary of her drive and experience were the Mayfield Centre, where she served on the advisory board and lectured for theatre attendants, and the Sterilising and Disinfection Society of Victoria, again a founding and committee member for many years.

During the 60s and 70s, the Department of External Affairs utilised her skill and experience for projects in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. These two areas she visited to advise on theatre and intensive care.

Outside her purely clinical nursing interests, the spiritual needs of nurses, and the need for moral and ethical direction led her to encourage membership of the Catholic Nurses Guild. Once again her drive and enthusiasm facilitated a World Conference in Melbourne in 1982.

After 25 years at the coalface, Sister was transferred to St Vincent's Sydney as a supervisor in 1980 in charge of the cleaning department.

This was purely a transit stage. In 1983 her management and clinical, skills were brought out of storage with a move to Launceston. She took over Infection Control, and the role of Deputy Director of Nursing. As well she was involved in reorganising the theatres, and made a real presence as a patient visitor.

In May 1995 Sister was invested as a member in the general division of the Order of Australia in Government House Tasmania. This award recognized a lifetime of dedicated service as a pioneer in operating theatre and intensive care nursing.

On Monday, December 1st, 2008, the Australian College of Operating Room Nurses bestowed an Honorary Fellowship on Felix.

Well done thou good and faithful servant.

Marea J. Fennell

Jean Isabell Carroll
24.12.2008



Sister Patricia (Jean) became a Sister of Charity on 27th August 1949. On 8th September, she began her nursing training at St Vincent's in Sydney. Her ministry in nursing took her to Toowoomba, Bathurst, Fitzroy, St Vincent's and the Private Hospital in Sydney. After her final term as Assistant Director of Nursing in Fitzroy, Patricia retired but did volunteer work at the Sisters of Charity Outreach in Sydney. St Joseph's Village, Auburn became her home from 2005 until her death on Christmas Eve 2008.

These are some extracts from the Eulogy her nephew gave at her funeral:

Born April 1917 in Hay, her character was formed in her early experiences of life. Growing up at Mullagong with a vibrant family life, Sister Jean experienced hardship and loss, as well as love and faith. Like all the Carroll women, Jean had strength of character and conviction.

Jean always strove to maintain contact with her extended family and friends, wherever they were. Jean's sense of family extended beyond blood, in deep, meaningful friendships forged across the years with many, many people.

In response we always felt privileged to have her join us for special occasions, or for no occasion at all. She has always been an integral member of our family.

Jean had many aspects to her identity - sister, aunt, friend, adopted grandmother, confidant, advisor and supporter.

She was a good sister to her siblings, always getting the best medical support available for those of us in need.

An interesting conversationalist with an educated and considered outlook on life, Jean was a woman who would discuss all subjects, providing a great deal of wisdom and surprise to the rest of us - sometimes in equal measures. A woman with a true sense of kindness and a genuine interest in others, a woman of faith who daily tried to live in accordance with her faith, and when her life touched ours we were the better for the experience.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Church of Philippi:

So then, my brothers and dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful in the Lord. I miss you very much dear friends, you are my joy and my crown.

A few days before she died, I asked her what, if anything, she wanted said today. "Oh I can't be bothered with all that, that's their problem!" After a pause, she asked me to convey a message - "Thank you for your kindness and love".

Guy Evans

Eileen May Gale
30.1.2009



Eileen May is our sister: not in any sense by birthright but because she is a Sister of Charity, this journey began in 1942 when Eileen May entered the Sisters of Charity, having been born and grown up in Sydney.

Once Eileen left the profession of teaching she became involved with the nurses and all that happened at Caritas Christi Hospice, Kew. Eileen May was in this position for over thirty years and became very involved with the nurses who were doing their training at Caritas. Everyone knew Eileen May.

Her infectious laugh; her wonderful use of words; her outstanding sense of humour and her joyfulness as a religious was evident to all who came in contact with her.

Anna and I became involved in the late 1980's when we all lived in the same community. We had fun; we had outings together and we had words!!

We became more involved with Eileen when she moved to Cambridge House. It was at this time that moves were being made to close our hostel at Kew requiring that Sisters be appointed to a companion community. Eileen May did not wait to be appointed - she asked Anna and I if we would look after her. We were thrilled and thus began a wonderful time, a privileged time - a time never to be forgotten. Not only did Eileen May affect our lives for

the better but she had a great effect on the staff and residents at Cambridge House, who also loved her dearly. She had many visitors over the years, none so committed as Sr Margaret Mary, Bernadette and Joyce who brought Holy Communion to her regularly.

In her early years at Cambridge House Eileen was asked about her feelings toward moving from the convent to a nursing home, I am taking the liberty of finishing with a poem that she wrote about this subject. It was a difficult time for her and the poem just expresses the beautiful soul within Eileen May.

Leaving Caritas Christi Hospice
by Eileen May Gale rsc

Quote from Mrs Aeness Gunn *We of the Never Never*:

"Called the never never because they who have lived there and loved it, never never voluntarily leave it".

Living within the precincts for more than 30 years

That I was asked to leave was never one of my fears.

I had slept in every building on the large estate,

So, did not think that I would become the Victim of cruel fate

But a v.o.c. I was ever to be*

And I took it from God's hands

For he tempers the winds with such loving care

He knows the burden that each may bear.

So, it began to dawn on me

This was the place I was meant to be

To disperse the word to those who've not heard

Of God's kindness and mercy and love.

**victim of circumstance*

Congregational Leader And Council



Sisters Gaye Reynolds, Laureen Dixon, Annette Cunliffe, Teresita Marcelo and Libbey Byrne.



Congregational Chapel, Potts Point



Many Sisters attended the Eucharistic Commissioning

Sister Annette Cunliffe, the new Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity and her Council, were commissioned on Monday 8th December, 2008 at a Eucharist in the Congregation's chapel at Potts Point.

Principal celebrant, Archbishop Adrian Doyle of Hobart, and concelebrant Bishop Bernard O'Grady, OP, family and friends of the five sisters, together with many Sisters of Charity gathered to pray with and for the new leader and council as they began their new ministry of service within the Congregation. At the conclusion of the liturgy, the celebration continued with lunch in the dining room of St Vincent's College.

Annette, Laureen, Libbey, Teresita and Gaye are most grateful for the promise of continued prayer for their ongoing ministry which will conclude in December 2014.



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