



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF AUSTRALIA

1838 - 2013

175 years
impelled by Christ's love

COLLECTORS' EDITION 3 / MARCH 2014



Keep in touch

SISTERS OF CHARITY: THEN AND NOW

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Early Sisters move to other States in Australia

Excerpts from Congregational Archives

NEW SOUTH WALES: 1838

The Sisters moved to Parramatta in January 1839 and began visiting the Factory twice a day, until 1847, teaching needlework to the women, giving religious instruction and teaching hymns. Such was the Sisters' commitment that they refused government offers to pay them a stipend: their Rule said that any service given to the poor must be done gratis.

From the early days of the Congregation in Australia, the Sisters established foundations in the other Eastern States.

These Sisters came from a congregation active in teaching, nursing, looking after orphans and repentant women, used to managing its own affairs (including finance). The pioneer Sisters visited and instructed women convicts and the sick, taught poor children, prepared people to receive the sacraments, cared for repentant women and orphans and helped newly arrived homeless and jobless women.

For these Sisters the heat was an ordeal.

They wore habits made for a different climate, composed of layers of black serge with close-fitting white caps, partly starched, topped with a black veil attracting the sun. The Sisters walked every day to their various duties on dusty, unlit roads. Lack of a permanent home until 1856 made it difficult to establish regular ministries.

Sister Baptist De Lacy inspired the other Sisters to open a hospital. After the purchase of the Sisters' first permanent home, 'Tarmons', it became possible. The first St Vincent's Hospital in Australia was opened on the site (in what is now Potts Point) in 1857. With public support and a permanent location, the Sisters were able to open a school in 1858. Many other foundations followed in Sydney and around New South Wales.

TASMANIA: 1847 On 20 June 1847 Sisters John Cahill, De Sales O'Brien and Xavier Williams arrived at Hobart Town on board the Louisa. They had come to Hobart at the request of Bishop Willson and because of some difficulties with the church hierarchy in Sydney. The Sisters took up residence in the presbytery attached to St Joseph's Church. This was the home of the Sisters of Charity for 110 years until 1957 when they moved to Sandy Bay.

From the beginning, the Sisters worked among the underprivileged, visiting the gaol (then in Campbell St), the Female Factory (on the site of the Cascade Brewery) and were with the children at the Queen's Orphan School, New Town. They also gave religious instruction, supervised the school that was attached to the convent and visited people in their homes. In time, the Sisters established their own schools, other places of social welfare and in 1944,

the Sisters established St Vincent's Hospital in Launceston.

VICTORIA: 1889 At the invitation of Archbishop Thomas Carr (pictured right and transcribed below), Mother Francis McGuigan, superior general and Mother Xavier Cunningham (the first Australian Sister of Charity), accompanied the first community of Sisters to Melbourne – Sisters M. Berchmans Daly, Monica Cavanagh, Lawrence Normoyle, Madeleine Mitchell and Benedict O'Brien. Later in the month, Mother Gertrude Davis joined the community as superior.

*St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne
April 5th 1888*

My dear Mother Rectress,

The time has come when we hope to be able to introduce a foundation of the Sisters of Charity with Melbourne. We have a very zealous ladies' Committee collecting funds for the purpose, and by this time they have collected £1,000. The Committee is anxious that a house should be secured in a central part of the City where the Sisters could be temporarily or permanently provided with a home. Kindly communicate with the Cardinal and let me know your decision at your earliest convenience.

Wishing your Good Sisters and yourself, the fullness of the Pascal joys.

I remain My dear Mother Rectress truly faithfully yours

Thomas Carr



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Cover (photographic memorabilia from each State): Top to bottom: Potts Point Chapel, Tarmons and St Vincent's College (NSW). Mt Carmel College Sandy Bay (TAS). St Mary's Girls High School Liverpool (NSW). St Vincent's Toowoomba (right) (QLD). Stages of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (VIC). Background: Invitation from Archbishop Carr (VIC).



*Kindly communicate with the funders
and let us know your decision
at your earliest convenience.
Love Sister &
Sister of the
My dear Mother Restless
affectionately yours
James J. Carr.*

*St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne
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The group arrived in Melbourne on 17th January 1889 and were met at Spencer Street Station by Reverend Dean Donaghy, Cathedral administrator. The Ladies Committee had everything in order and welcomed the Sisters to their new home – a rented two-storeyed house in Albert Street, East Melbourne. His Grace, the Archbishop, called to welcome the Sisters and arranged to celebrate the first Mass in the small convent oratory. Before Mother Francis and Mother Xavier returned to Sydney, the Archbishop and Dean called on the Sisters and gave them £900 which had been collected for them.

21st January saw St Patrick's School opened. There were swarms of boys and girls, who eagerly greeted the new teachers. The school population increased and a terrace of three houses adjoining the school was purchased. The community occupied No. 1 of the Terraces in Victoria Parade.

Mother Berchmans Daly became the driving force for the establishment of St Vincent's Hospital. To raise funds to make this a reality, a committee was formed and the first St Vincent's Ball was held in the Melbourne Town Hall in June 1893.

A Hospital Fair held in the school brought in £500. With private donations, the capital was increased to £1,000 and a block of land at the rear was bought. The house to receive the first patients was No. 3 Victoria Parade Terrace. At the opening on November 6th 1893, Archbishop Carr praised the women who, by their tender and loving kindness, would assuage the sufferings and sorrows of humanity. As with the other States, other foundations were made over the years.

QUEENSLAND: 1920 Mary Aikenhead had been approached by Bishop Quinn in the 1850s to send sisters to Queensland but this request could not be met. However, many decades later, Mother Berchmans Daly accepted an invitation from Archbishop Duhig for Sisters of Charity to begin the foundation of a hospital in Toowoomba Queensland. The first community went into residence in May 1920.

The Archbishop celebrated the first Mass on 18th May. He later wrote to Mother Berchmans, expressing his appreciation of the Sisters of Charity and stated that the founding of a hospital in Toowoomba, would be very gratifying to the people

Above left: Ashgrove, Queensland – taking the cab to school. Bottom left: St Joseph's Convent, Tasmania, now the Presbytery. Back: 1888 Invitation to Melbourne from Archbishop Carr.

of the Darling Downs, who take such pride in their city and district. The hospital, St Vincent's, was opened on 19th November 1922.

In 1925, the Sisters of Charity became involved in education in Queensland. The Stewart homestead *Grantully*, Ashgrove, was purchased and the Sisters moved into the residence there in May. In June, St Finbar's School was opened in rooms in the convent. By 1927, the new church school was completed and *Grantully* was available for secondary pupils. Other schools and health facilities followed these first foundations.

During the Sisters of Charity 175th Anniversary year of the coming to Australia, prayerful celebrations are being held in each of the Eastern States as we remember and give thanks to God, our pioneer sisters and all those who worked hand in hand with the Sisters of Charity over the years for the greater glory of God.



Responding to Worldwide needs and overseas Missions

Some Reflections on my Missionary Journeys: Part 1

Karan Varker rsc

After teaching for many years in Sydney and Melbourne and following a period of preparation at the Pacific Mission Institute, Turramurra, in 1989 I was missioned to teach in St Mary's Girls' Boarding School, Asitavi, Bougainville, PNG. For the first time I left Australian shores and my culture shock began immediately. As I passed through customs at Jackson Airport, PNG, I felt the impact of being surrounded by people totally different in culture and colour. Later as I flew over the beautiful Coral Sea to Bougainville, I thought I was surely going to paradise.



Left: The kitchen in Bougainville.
Below: My Year 12 Samoan students.



"Little did I know that I would immediately be caught up in this country's violent civil war which would last for over ten years, resulting in the deaths of more than ten thousand people, displacement of persons, destruction of villages and closure of all schools."

Although teaching was difficult under the increasingly dangerous circumstances, these purple-black skinned Melanesian girls were courageous, intelligent and stately in appearance. They spoke three languages – Pigeon, village language and English. Asitavi was considered one of the best schools in PNG. To stay at St Mary's these teenagers had to plant, cultivate, harvest and cook their own food. They slept in double bunks in dormitories above their classrooms. At night when I would check them, at first I wondered why they covered themselves from the top of their heads to their toes with their sheets. I soon learnt it was to avoid bites of the dreaded malaria mosquitoes, nibbling of their fingers and toes by bush rats, and to keep out insects wishing to make homes in their ears!

As the fighting and violence intensified, the girls' villages were being burnt and they became distressed because their parents had disappeared somewhere into the jungle. Later even some of the local religious sisters had to flee to the safety of the jungle for some years.

By the end of the 1989 school year it became obvious that the situation was extremely dangerous. Before the girls could return to school the following year, rebels destroyed St Mary's High School, Asitavi, and then burnt the Marist Brothers Boys' College. Schools on Bougainville did not open till ten years later.

After my return, for the following 12 months of 1990 I held an administrative position at the Pacific Mission Institute. This allowed me time to overcome the heaviness I felt at what had happened to the lovely Bougainvillian girls, their teachers and their families. Then in 1991 I was missioned to teach at St Mary's College, Viamoso, Samoa. I had to study a map to find Samoa in the middle of the Pacific Ocean near the Equator.

Here I had my first experience of teaching Polynesian girls. They had golden skin, lovely white teeth and flowing long black hair which they tied into plaits during school time. My role was to teach English, mathematics, and religious education to the 80 or so Year 12 students, as well as to assist the principal,

a wonderful Samoan SMSM, and to take care of the library. The curriculum mostly followed the New Zealand system. It was so hot there, and the girls used to wonder why their white Australian teacher always had water running down her face! These girls were a delight to teach. Later, as well as teaching at the College, I was asked by the Samoan Catholic Education Board to take on the role of teacher trainer and I did this for several years. Up to this time, many Samoan teachers in Catholic schools had no government acknowledgment. In this latter role, I was able to gain for them some government recognition and credit. During my time in Samoa from 1991 to 1996, we survived both a severe four-day cyclone and a damaging earthquake...

From the Editor: Sr Karan's Reflections will conclude in the next edition of KIT.

Mission to Fiji

S.M. Mark Lehmann rsc

In 1956, Bishop Foley of Fiji, appealed to Mother St Agnes (then our Superior General) to send some sisters to his vicariate. The Fijian sisters in the Pacific, had traditionally engaged in domestic work only, but his aim was to have them educated so they could eventually manage their own schools.

It was my privilege to be one of the first sisters to go. Sister Florence Bailey and I, sailed on the *Orion* to Fiji in March 1957, accompanied by Mother Peter to help us settle in. By then, other Bishops in the Pacific had sent their novices as well, so our first classes included young women from Tonga, Samoa, the Gilbert Islands, Rotuma and, of course, Fiji.

As time went on, Sisters Baptist Whyte, Anne Crowley and Dorothy Harris (then Sr Donatus), took part in the project.



Above: Mother Peter and Sr Mark with Fijian Sisters. Right: Sr Mark with the Novices.



“It is now 50 years or more since we worked there, but it would seem that God has blessed our work.”

Last year (2013), the Fijian Sisters took over the management of a large secondary school in Suva, and are now also responsible for several primary schools elsewhere in the Islands.

God's ways are not our ways – sometimes He is slow to bless our efforts – but he does bless them eventually!

Responding to People Beyond Our Shore

Reflections from Marina Ward rsc (Part 2)

As I wrote in Part 1, we moved out of the Bundi Convent in December 1975 and I went to live in our other Convent in Megjar, along the Coast from Madang.

Papua New Guinea received its Independence in 1975 and we took on ministries other than in schools. The people of Megjar had appreciated the help the children had received in the school and now wanted us to help the adults. For one year, we worked in the villages, visiting, talking about Scripture, prayer, family life, health. By this time, we were able to speak Pidgin English.

We travelled to villages, even out into the mountains in a four-wheel drive Suzuki. In 1976, we had a Training Centre built at Megjar to train Church leaders and Prayer leaders. Sisters Catherine Tierney and Kathleen Fanning did wonderful work in this Centre for five years.

In 1976, I became a member of the first PNG Movement for a Better World Team with three SVD priests, one Holy Spirit Sister and one de Montfort Sister. We visited every Province in PNG (except Papua) and gave Retreats in Parishes and Senior High Schools. The PNG people were very responsive. The adults had received basic faith instruction and were eager to hear more, share thoughts, questions and prayer.

In some ways, at that time, I thought that, although the PNG people were behind Australia socially, church-wise, they were ahead in their use of Church leaders, Catechists and Prayer leaders in Parishes, and especially in their villages.



From the coast of Megjar looking towards Karkar Island PNG.

“I have very fond memories of the people of Papua New Guinea and am enriched by having been with such beautiful people.”

Responding to Worldwide needs and overseas Missions

Continued from page 5



Pilgrim on Mission – Rwanda Experience

Leone Wittmack rsc

Last September I had the wonderful opportunity of undertaking the Pilgrimage of St James from St Jean Pied du Port in the South of France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. I continued my journey on to Finisterre, the end of the road so to speak, on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean a distance of nearly 800kms with five weeks of constant walking. This was a Spiritual journey for me, a time of deep reflection and it gave me the opportunity to contemplate my Pilgrim Ministry journey as a Sister of Charity, being open to the many surprises that greeted me along the many winding, rocky, mountainous, beautiful and interesting paths. This earthly terrain in many ways is a mirror of life's reality.

My Pilgrim journey in Spain gave me the chance to divest myself of much unwanted baggage, while at the same time offer gratitude for the extraordinary places in our world that I have found myself and especially for the opportunity to walk with those people who experience marginalisation, violence and poverty, in ways that many of us in Australia couldn't even imagine.

This journey had led me to minister in places such as the Refugee camps on the Thai/Cambodian Border; in Papua New Guinea; working in the Unaccompanied Children's Centres in Rwanda and Zaire (now the Republic of Congo), and in East Timor. Visiting our sisters working in Zambia, Nigeria, East Timor and Samoa whilst on our Leadership Team has added to the rich tapestry I call my life and my view of the world.

I would like to share with you just one little part of this journey – my Ministry with the Unaccompanied Children of Rwanda. I think that when we first start to minister in these places we have the mistaken idea that we have a lot to give and are going to be of immense service to the people. This is true to a degree. However what we soon begin to realise is that we receive from them much more than we could ever give. This at least has certainly been my experience.



“My Pilgrim journey in Spain gave me the chance to divest myself of much unwanted baggage, while at the same time offer gratitude for the extraordinary places in our world...”

Working in the unaccompanied Children's Centres in Rwanda on two occasions at the time of the genocide in 1994 and 1995 as a Sister of Charity with CARE Australia was an experience that really changed my life. It challenged my spiritual, mental and physical capacity and it even caused me to question my faith. However it also taught me how to live one day at a time, something that I have to remind myself to do every day, and to realise that life is precious and that everyone has the right to experience that preciousness.

The children that I was privileged to work with had no names. They had been separated from their parents, families and friends during a time of violence and bloodshed; and when they came to the Unaccompanied Centres, they were given a number.

Some of the babies and small children had been picked up from the side of the roads by older children looking for food and safety. Some were only days old, their mothers no longer alive. They were confused, hungry, emotionally starved and in some cases close to death. A number of them did die, but the ones who survived certainly gave me hope and life. The Rwandese staff with whom we worked, soon gave them a name, affording them some dignity and respect.

Children are amazing, and given some love and care, they seem to be able to bounce back somehow in a way that we adults may find impossible. As children they would play tricks on each other, laugh, play, fight, but at the same time look after each other.

However, underneath all the laughter were scars which I believe would never heal. One would only have to observe their drawings to realise the shocking violence that had confronted them as they looked for safety, these experiences now a part of their young lives forever.

In spite of all of this, the children of Rwanda had great rhythm, their singing and dancing was a source of joy and happiness in a place of violence and pain. They loved playing soccer and they wanted to go back to school. One of the challenges for us working at the Centre, was to organise 100 children to return to school on the same day.

In the Unaccompanied Children's Centre that I was managing, we opened a kindergarten and managed to get some drums to allow the children to tap into their spirit with rhythm and song. This is where I acquired my love of drumming, as I attended kindergarten and learnt from them how to drum and make music to the beat of the day.

The Children of Rwanda have taught me so many things: how to laugh when things get tough; how to find my own heart-beat in the rhythm of the drum; how to let go of what is not really necessary in this life, and how to move on. These children showed me the God of forgiveness, compassion and love and they gave me a life-force that will stay with me forever.

Today in Australia, the plight of our own Indigenous peoples, refugees and those seeking asylum is well documented. Working in Refugee Camps in different areas of the world has shown me what it is like to be caught in unjust wars and violence, and my experience has certainly coloured my stance and opinion, as we look for ways to walk with these people and to speak out against injustice. Like the Children of Rwanda these Asylum Seekers and Refugees do have a face, a name, a family and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

The laughter and the heartbeat of the children of Rwanda will stay with me forever as I continue on my Pilgrim journey as a Sister of Charity in God's vast Mission.

Collection of photographs on page 06 from: Rwanda (top left, top right and middle right), PNG (middle left), Cambodia (bottom left), East Timor (bottom right).

Residential Child Care: Cabramatta 1979-1985

Maureen Heffernan rsc

The first Sisters of Charity who came to Australia helped care for children at the Orphan School next to the Female Factory at Parramatta as one of their first ministries. As the social situation of the colony changed, the Orphan School was no longer needed. In 1888, it was seen that some family circumstances, such as death of a spouse or inability of parents to adequately care for their children, necessitated long-term care of the children of these families. The Sisters of Charity opened an Orphanage for such care, St Anne's Orphanage at Liverpool.



The Child Care Centre run by sisters at Taroona in Tasmania.

With advances in understanding the needs of children through psychology and social work, new approaches to child care also developed. The heartbreak of broken relationships was seen too frequently and impacted deeply in a negative way on the developing child. Preventative measures to sustain families in maintaining care of their children, resulted in Family Group Homes replacing large institutions. In January 1979, St. Anne's, no longer an 'orphanage', began a new project of short-term care of children aged between 12 months and 17 years. The St Anne's Children's Centre was situated at Loloma Street, Cabramatta, a house already owned and previously used as one of the Family Group Homes of St Anne's Liverpool.

The house at Loloma Street was ideal for the care of up to eight children at any one time, whose usual residence encompassed the geographic areas of Liverpool, Campbelltown, Holroyd and Parramatta – a local service for local people. It accommodated both boys and girls requiring temporary care for approximately one, to two weeks. The time in care was flexible according to each child's needs. Most of the children were from single-parent families, without extended family to care for them at a time of crisis, such as a mother's hospitalisation or illness, or respite when a parent suffered mental health issues and was unable to cope for a short period of time.

Other children required a more permanent placement with a caring, compatible family. Much liaising took place between the Administrator and Placement Officers from both State and Catholic Welfare Offices to achieve good outcomes for the children. This, of course, took time, many months, with a gradual 'testing out' for the child/children and possible future families.

St Anne's Children's Centre was most fortunate to receive financial support from generous benefactors. A mini-van was a wonderful asset and provided many outings which gave a lot of pleasure to children and staff alike. The preparation of beach gear, food and drinks and play equipment was quite demanding but well worth it – no fights or arguments until we returned! One of my best memories is driving down the hill approaching Bronte Beach, and hearing an 'interesting' five year old boy gasp at the sight of the ocean, something he had never seen before! It was magic! Many times during the next week this little 'harum scarum' boy would come up to me and say, "Thanks for taking me to the beach!" A memorable occasion for both of us! My heart would go into my mouth when the same little boy would be called for by his mother's partner and sit behind said adult on his motorbike, and off they would go to visit Mum!

Approximately 300 children were cared for over these years and it was with sadness that I closed the door for the last time on Christmas Eve 1985. It was pleasing that in 1986, the house at Loloma Street was bought by the Department of Community Services for the care of children with mild disabilities, and so the care of children continued at these premises.

175 Year Anniversary Celebrations

31st December 2013

New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania

As 31st December was the actual anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Australia in 1838, current Sisters of Charity gathered in the various States of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania to celebrate this special occasion.

"This is the day the Lord had made: let us be glad and rejoice."

And indeed we did! There was an air of excitement and joy as we came together to remember and give thanks for the arrival of the five Sisters 175 years ago. A webcast had been set up in each State so that all could join in prayer at the same time. The prayerful Ritual was very moving and gave us a sense of bonding with each Sister of Charity in Australia, no matter where we were gathered.

We could sense the spirit and pride of Mary Aikenhead and those five great women in whose footsteps we walk, but also all those women who followed after them and whom we have known and loved.

Following the Ritual and the conclusion of the webcast, celebrations continued over lunch where conversations, laughter and stories continued. Toasts were made and special anniversary cakes enjoyed. A viewing of the new DVD 'Five Sisters,' was the culminating activity of the day and to everyone's delight, each sister received her own copy to take home.

All of us were most grateful to the group of sisters who had prepared the Ritual and to the teams in the various States who organised the décor and meal at each venue. It really was a most memorable and happy occasion.



Top right: Taroona, TAS. Second right: Potts Point, NSW.
Third right: Kew, VIC. Fourth right: Mt Olivet, QLD.
Above left: Clayton, VIC. Bottom left: Auburn, NSW.

Melbourne

St Patrick's Cathedral 22nd March 2014

Grey skies, misty rain and the stiff breeze of a Melbourne morning could do nothing to curb the sense of excitement and expectation as the crowds gathered at St Patrick's Cathedral at 10am on Saturday 22nd of March.

Delighted calls of recognition and reunions, the greeting of old friends and colleagues rose to a crescendo as all flocked into the Cathedral. Inside, all was in readiness for the Eucharist of Thanksgiving as the combined choirs of St Columba's and Catholic Ladies College were perfecting their notes, backed by Kevin Meese on the organ. The Planning Team and co-opted helpers were distributing Mass booklets and showing guests to their places and by 9.45am it was standing room only!

The Pre-Liturgy opened with a lone trumpeter, Georgina from CLC, brilliantly performing a piece she had especially written for the occasion. Margaret Costigan rsc gave the *Acknowledgement to Country*, followed by Helga Neidhart rsc reading the story of the first five sisters' arrival in Botany Bay in 1838, as St Columba's College banners bearing their names, were carried in procession by representatives of various ministries.

Teresita Marcelo rsc carried a picture of Mary Aikenhead, and Gaye Reynolds rsc lit the special 175 Years Congregational Candle, as Annette Cunliffe rsc welcomed all present. Sr Annette expressed her, and our gratitude to all – sisters, families, colleagues, and friends for their support over the 175 years.

Promptly at 10am, the choir and organ burst forth with the rousing chorus *'Lift up your Hearts to the Lord'*, as the procession of acolytes and some 30 clergy led by Archbishop Denis Hart, mounted the altar steps. Thoughtfully chosen readings were read by Denise Hannebery rsc and Elizabeth Costigan rsc, the Responsorial Psalm was beautifully sung by the cantor, Amelia, from St Columba's.

Archbishop Hart spoke warmly and sincerely of the influence and wide ranging impact that Mary Aikenhead's spirit and charisma had inspired over 175 years in Australia and in particular of the 125 years in Victoria. He spoke of his gratitude for the support he personally felt from Sr Annette and the sisters in Melbourne. He dared to make a change to the well thought-out liturgy by moving the Affirmation and Commitment to the end of the Mass!!

Prayers of Intercession were read by Sisters Loretta Bani, Colleen Bell, Colleen Jackson, Colleen McDonald, Amanda Nguyen and Patricia Walker. The gifts were carried to the altar by members of the Stapleton family led by Joan rsc representing the families of all the sisters.

The lines for Communion seemed never ending but the choir and organ continued to inspire. The sisters stood for the Affirmation and Commitment and as the applause died down the choir and organ again captured the mood with *'Light a Fire on the Earth'*. As the sisters followed the clergy procession, the congregation broke into thunderous applause which was amazing and truly humbling, and, as someone commented afterwards – 'The applause said it all!'

Brenan Hall at St Vincent's Hospital, the venue for Morning Tea, was so popular and tightly packed, that many groups availed themselves of the adjoining Zouki Café for refreshments and more conversation and sharing of memories, to conclude what all agreed was a wonderful day and a great celebration.

Top left: Magnificent choir of students. Top right: Prayers of Intercession read. Centre: Banners and symbol before the procession began. Centre left: Rousing applause as sisters leave Cathedral. Centre right: Archbishop and priests during Mass. Bottom left: Catching up with old friends. Bottom right: Enjoying Morning Tea chat.



175 Year Anniversary Special Celebrations

Continued from page 09

Parramatta

St Patrick's Cathedral 5th April 2014

During this year of 2014, the Sisters of Charity are celebrating the arrival of the first Religious women in Australia.

In 1838, 175 years ago, at the request of Bishop Polding, five Sisters of Charity volunteered to make the arduous crossing from Dublin to Sydney to bring comfort and hope to the most depressed and neglected women in the colony. The work of visiting the infamous Female Factory at Parramatta was the beginning of the mission of the sisters in Australia. Therefore it is only fitting that Parramatta was a place of celebration, reflection and thanksgiving for the graces and blessings of the past 175 years.

The celebration of this historic event in the history of the Australian Church and the Sisters of Charity began in Melbourne, where Mass was celebrated in St Patrick's Cathedral and will progress to Brisbane, Hobart and Sydney in the coming months.

Saturday, 5th April 2014 was a day of great celebration and thanksgiving in Parramatta, as the sisters came together with family members, friends, colleagues, past students and members of other congregations to remember and give thanks for the blessings of the past 175 years.

The Mass was concelebrated by the Most Reverend Anthony Fisher, the Most Reverend Kevin Manning, the Most Reverend Peter Ingham, the Most Reverend Terry Brady and a large number of priest friends of the sisters. The celebration took place in the beautiful 'new' St Patrick's Cathedral, on the very spot where Sr M. Xavier Williams, one of the original 'five', created history by becoming the first Religious woman to be professed in the new colony of NSW. This holy place, Parramatta, is the birthplace of the Sisters of Charity in Australia and where the five sisters began their journey of giving hope and solace to the most down trodden and desperate in the colony. So much has grown and developed from this place and these beginnings.



Top to bottom: The superb Choir of students. Bishop Fisher during the Mass. The procession of symbols begins. Present and past Congregational Leaders with Bishop Anthony cut the 175th cake. Sisters mingle for Afternoon Tea.

As a prelude to the Mass, representatives from each Order of Women Religious who have followed the original group of sisters into the diocese, up to the present day, were introduced, carrying symbols of their charism. This was a very moving tribute to the contribution of Religious Women from 1838 to the present.

The choir from Bethlehem College, Ashfield provided beautiful renditions of hymns that spoke of "gathering", of "Charity", of "standing on the shoulders of the ones who came before us". The contribution and quality of the choir was appreciated by all.

The first reading from *Isaiah* and the Gospel reading from *Matthew* followed the theme of bringing Good News to the poor and comforting the most needy in our midst.

This theme was also taken up by Bishop Fisher in his homily. He spoke of the service and self sacrifice of the Women Religious, as he reflected on the various works and the effect on the most needy in the young colony. This charity and compassion has been carried on by all religious who have followed in the footsteps of the five pioneers. In his final words he prayed that, impelled by the love of Christ, the Sisters of Charity will always be Good News for the poor, liberty for those captivated in any way, radical, magnetic – even "a little alarming".

As a finale to a wonderful celebration of thanksgiving and prayerful reflection, the congregation moved across the garden to the Cathedral Hall to mingle, renew acquaintances and enjoy a delicious afternoon tea. A fitting end to an historic occasion.

Jubilarians

January 2014

The whole congregation joined in prayer and thanksgiving for our Jubilarians!

Sister Brenda Jordan (Platinum), **Sisters Anne Crowley** and **Mary Fankhauser**

(Diamond) had private celebrations for their Platinum and Diamond Jubilees respectively.

Sr Genevieve Walsh (Golden) celebrated the special occasion on Sunday, 2nd February with a Eucharist in the Chapel at St Joseph's Village, Auburn.

It was a quiet but joyous celebration, with her brother Fr Kevin Walsh as chief celebrant, assisted by the parish priest, Fr Ray Farrell. Sr Genny's mother, Mrs Nancy Walsh was also present, as well as sisters who had taught her and others who are resident in the Village. There were friends, including Sisters of Charity; teaching colleagues and ex-students from St Vincent's College; Bethlehem College Ashfield and the former St Mary's Hurstville; as well as the Principal and other staff members from St John's Auburn where Sr Genny exercises her ministry to students from Sudan.



Sr Genny renewed her Vows publicly and the Congregational Leader, Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc presented her with a Papal Blessing (above). All members of the Council also shared in the celebration. Sr Genny's community members were present and assisted with practical preparations before and after the Mass. All present then shared afternoon tea. After the toast had been proposed, Sr Genny responded, thanking the many people who were part of her journey.

Obituaries

We remember each deceased Sister with love and pray for her.

Genevieve Campbell rsc



LILIAN AGNES CAMPBELL was born on 23rd September 1918 in Stanmore NSW, the first of the two daughters of Henry and Sarah Campbell who had come from Britain to make their home in Australia. Lilian and her sister Nancy were educated by the Sisters of Charity at Bethlehem College. Lilian was elected as School Captain of the College in the year of her Leaving Certificate.

When Lilian entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Charity, she was given the name Genevieve. She was professed on 24th August 1938, in the hundredth year after the pioneer sisters set out from Ireland to come to Australia.

Genevieve trained as a teacher and after some experience in primary schools, taught secondary students in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales. She was greatly loved by her students and gave extra assistance in her gentle, patient way. After further study and training, she became the Congregational Archivist during the time that she was the Secretary General to the Congregational Leader and Council for a number of years.

In November 2007, she became a resident at St Joseph's Village and was a kindly helper while she was well enough. In the last months of her life others gave her their loving care. She died on 28th December 2013 at the age of 95. As well as family, sisters and friends, many ex-students attended her Requiem Mass, honouring their memories of her as teacher, principal and friend. We give thanks to God for Genevieve, a quiet achiever, who loved her work and those with whom she worked.

Sarah Ryan rsc



SARAH THERESA RYAN was born on 23rd August 1924. She was the second of the five children of Ernest and Norah Ryan. Her older sister, Mary, was also a Sister of Charity and died in 2003. Sarah's family, nieces and nephews were very special to her.

Sarah attended St Francis and Mt St Patrick's Schools at Paddington and St Vincent's College Potts Point. She worked for some years as a stenographer before entering the Sisters of Charity Novitiate on 2nd February 1944. She was professed on 31st August 1946.

Her ministry as a trained teacher was at schools in Sydney – Concord (Secondary), Hurstville, Paddington, Ashfield, Potts Point until 1985. She then took up Administration and Finance work at St Vincent's College Potts Point, St Vincent's Private Hospital and the Congregational Finance Office where she worked for several years. Sarah moved to St Joseph's Village Auburn in 2006 and because of deteriorating health, received constant assistance and care.

During the Vigil, which was held at St Joseph's Village, several sisters who were her ex-students spoke of Sarah's amazing skills as a teacher and Sister of Charity. At her funeral, there were former colleagues who had taught with Sarah at Bethlehem College and College students formed a guard of honour with staff from St Joseph's Village after the Mass.

Sarah was 89 years old when she died on 12th February. Sarah will be remembered as a committed Sister of Charity and a gifted teacher who did all for the greater glory of God.

First Profession as a Sister of Charity

Amanda Nguyen rsc

On Saturday, 25th January the Sisters of Charity of Australia shared in the joyous occasion of the first Profession of Amanda Nguyen. The ceremony was held in the Congregational Chapel at Potts Point with the celebration of the Eucharist led by Fr Gerald Gleeson and Fr Lam Vu, ofm Cap.



Above: Sr Amanda and Sr Annette at Afternoon Tea.
Middle: Sr Amanda signs her vows. Right: Amanda (second on right) with her siblings.



As Amanda pronounced her Vows during the Liturgy, Sr Annette Cunliffe, Congregational Leader received them. Amanda's parents, brother and sisters, as well as some of Amanda's friends, were among the special guests. Family members and Sisters of Charity who had been part of Amanda's journey to this point, took leading roles in the celebration.



The Chapel had been beautifully prepared and sisters from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland joined with Amanda in prayerful support. Colleagues too, from other Congregations, who shared the Kairos experience with Amanda were also present, as well as friends from Australian Catholic University and long-time friends, one of who travelled from the United States of America.

After Mass, Sr Amanda spoke beautifully in thanking her parents, family, friends, and Sr Linda Ferrington and Sr Maureen Heffernan, Director and Assistant Director of Initial Formation, and all who had supported her during her time as an Inquirer and Novice. Amanda will return to Melbourne to complete her studies.



A representative from each group came forward to cut the '175th' cake!

"In worship and song, in laughter and tears, we shared together."

Twilight Session

Deepening Understanding of the Charism of the Sisters of Charity with Colleagues

Rosemary Young

Inspiration, pride and a sense of purpose were strong themes at the Twilight Gathering held at Glebe in late February. Sr Annette and Council, Congregational Staff members, members of the Advisory Finance Committee, Congregational Property Committee, Sisters of Charity Foundation Board members, and Sisters of Charity Community Care Limited Board members, shared presentations designed to highlight their various contributions to the charism of the Sisters of Charity of Australia in the 175th year of service and beyond.

In worship and song, in laughter and tears, we shared together.

By the time the 175th 'birthday' cake succumbed to the combined pressure of representatives of each of the groups gathered, the passion and commitment of everyone present had been renewed and we had all come to know each other a little better.

Pride in the vision and charism of the Congregation was tangible and our sense of purpose reinforced.