



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF AUSTRALIA

1838 - 2013

175 years
impelled by Christ's love

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Keep in touch

SISTERS OF CHARITY: THEN AND NOW

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The Lord your God will exult with joy over you; he will renew you by his love; he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.

Zephaniah 3:18



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After Pioneer Sisters go to Hobart – links with the Benedictine Nuns

Extract from the writings of Moira O'Sullivan rsc

Originally, Sisters of Charity were the only women religious in Australia. Even though Sisters of Mercy arrived in West Australia in 1848, the next to come to the east were the enclosed Benedictine nuns. When they arrived in 1848, the only Sisters of Charity who were then in Parramatta and Sydney were those indebted to Polding. All of them owed their acceptance into religious life to him.

The senior Sister was Sr M. Baptist De Lacy, the only one remaining of the original five pioneers from Ireland. She was regarded as Archbishop Polding's postulant, since she had entered especially to go to work in Australia. She was such a supporter of Polding and the Sydney Benedictines that the Sisters who went to Hobart were sure that she was prepared to become a Benedictine if he wished it (though she later denied this). However, there was a papal prohibition (dated 30 June 1836) forbidding members to change from the Sisters of Charity, unless they had permission from Rome and unless it were to a stricter institute. This may have some bearing on why Sr M. Scholastica Gibbons later remained a Sister of Charity, although Polding would have liked her to change to the community she co-founded with him. The 1836 rescript was copied into the copy of the Constitutions which the Sisters brought from Ireland.



The House at Vineyard, 1856 Parramatta by Conrad Martens

At the time that Srs Scholastica Gregory osb and Magdalen LeClerc osb arrived in Australia, besides De Lacy, in the communities at Parramatta and Sydney, there would have been, as far as can be established, about six other professed Sisters: M. Augustine Marum, two O'Briens (M. Joseph and M. Veronica), two Gibbons (M. Ignatius and M. Scholastica), and M. Teresa Walsh. Others in the Congregation were a novice, Miss Connolly, two domestic Sisters (Jane Swayne and Ann Shortall) and a domestic novice (Margaret Daly).

When the Benedictine nuns first arrived in Sydney they were not immediately bound by enclosure that restricted other orders of women. This gave them freedom to meet the Sisters of Charity. Scholastica mentions in her letter of 22 March 1848, a visit to the Sisters of Charity at Parramatta as if it were their first meeting. Both groups would have enjoyed conversation with other women religious and it was natural that a relationship developed between the Sisters of Charity and their visitors.



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Cover (Captions):



Left: Painting of Subiaco House

Below: Sr Mary Brigid McGuigan



Benedictine nuns and Sisters of Charity shared experiences of hardship, though those felt by the Benedictine nuns were more severe because they were isolated.

Just as the Sisters of Charity had spent almost a fortnight after their arrival in the bishop's house at Woolloomooloo, the Benedictine nuns, Gregory and LeClerc, stayed for their first weeks in Australia in the Benedictine monastery while Polding looked for a house for them.

In the 1830s, Hannibal Macarthur confirmed his social status by commissioning John Verge to design a neo-classical mansion at the Vineyard. However, heavy losses in the depression of the early 1840s forced him to sell his estate in 1848. It was bought by JB Polding, the Catholic Archbishop of Australia, who set up a community of Benedictine nuns there. In 1851 the nuns opened a girls' boarding school in the house, which had been renamed Subiaco. The school survived for 70 years, although the Catholic Church progressively sold off most of the land of the original estate.

Dictionary of Sydney

Benedictine nuns and Sisters of Charity shared experiences of hardship, though those felt by the Benedictine nuns were more severe because they were isolated. They relied on the monks to bring their supplies. The nuns' efforts to make Subiaco self-sufficient added to the work of teaching and hours of prayers. The strength of the first two was overtaxed. Scholastica Gregory's death within two years, on 1 October 1850, witnessed to this. The plan was for the nuns to parallel for girls what the monks did for boys at Lyndhurst, namely to provide education for the better classes

The achievements and level of culture of past pupils like Catherine and Emily Heydon and Mary Brigid McGuigan bear sufficient witness to the high standard of the Subiaco teaching. In contrast, to the Sisters of Charity emphasis on the poor, the Subiaco school was for 'young ladies'.

At the same time, the schools and their teachers were linked by relationships. The first students at Subiaco when it opened in 1851 were Julia Marum and Edith Makinson. Julia had two aunts who entered the Sisters of Charity and her priest uncle had come on the same ship as the pioneer Sisters of Charity. Others educated at Subiaco became Sisters of Charity – Mary Brigid McGuigan was one and she became superior general of the Sisters of Charity for a period of thirty-eight years.

Sisters of Charity will always be grateful for the prayers of the Benedictine nuns whose prayers and friendship are valued as part of our story.



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The places where prison ministry began

By Janet Howse, Congregational Archives Manager

The beginning of 175 years of Prison Ministry

The Prison Ministry undertaken by the Sisters of Charity of Australia continues a tradition commenced by the Sisters of Charity in Ireland. In 1821, at the request of the Governor of Kilmainham Gaol, Mary Aikenhead and Catherine Walsh provided spiritual solace to two women prisoners who were awaiting execution.

Sydney Gaol, George Street, 1797-1841

Following the arrival of the five pioneer Sisters of Charity in Sydney at the end of 1838, the Sisters initially visited prisoners at the Sydney Gaol, a stone building on the corner of George and Essex Streets, which was demolished in 1841, when Darlinghurst Gaol opened.



Sisters at the remaining wall of the Female Factory at Parramatta in 2008.

The Female Factory, Parramatta, 1821-1848

The Sisters also travelled to Parramatta in mid-January 1839, commencing their first prison ministry for women at the Female Factory, to which all unassigned convict women were sent. Here they were seen to bring about improvements in the behaviour and morale of the female convicts. The last convict ship arrived in New South Wales in November 1840 and the Female Factory closed down in 1848.

Darlinghurst Gaol, 1841-1914

At Darlinghurst Gaol, the Sisters continued their prison visitation as part of their work with the underprivileged. Following the closure of Darlinghurst in 1914, the Sisters continued their prison ministry with the inmates at Long Bay Gaol, Malabar, south of the city's centre.

“I was in prison and you visited me.”

Matthew 25:36

The Cascades Female Factory, Hobart, 1828-1856 and Women's Prison, 1856-1877

Following the arrival of the first three Sisters of Charity in Hobart in June 1847, the sisters went almost daily to visit the female Catholic convicts at the Cascades Female Factory.

In 1851, they were refused permission to visit “during the hours of labour” as the official in charge alleged that their instruction interfered with the discipline and work of the women! One hundred years later however, in 1947, at the time of the centenary of the foundation of the Congregation in Hobart, the official prison view of the Sisters had changed when the Controller of Prisons sent a memorial to the Sisters congratulating them on the centenary of the community in Hobart and their prison ministry.

Long Bay Gaol, Sydney, 1909 –

A women's reformatory commenced at Long Bay in 1909, followed by the men's facility in 1914. Sisters of Charity initially travelled by tram, later travelling by car, to visit inmates.

In these early years and the years that followed, the faithful ministry of the Sisters with prisoners and their families could be said to set the scene for the longest continuing mission of the Sisters of Charity in Australia. It holds a special place in the Congregation's history.

Acknowledgement and appreciation is due to the research and writing undertaken by my predecessors, Patricia Jacobsen and Denise Corrigan, and to the many Sisters of Charity who have contributed to the historical record.



Left: View from the Sydney Hotel by Augustus Earle, 1826, looking north from Grosvenor Street with the Sydney Gaol in the centre. (Courtesy of the National Library of Australia)

Below: Entrance to Darlinghurst Gaol in the late 19th century.



Above: The Female Factory site, Hobart, November 1892, Courtesy of the University of Tasmania Library. (Photographer J W Beattie)

Right: Sister M Maurus Tierney and Sister Brigid Hussey at the entrance to Long Bay Gaol in the early 1950s.



Today's prison ministry reflections...

By Pauline Staunton rsc

Sisters not only visited Long Bay but their ministry reached out as far as Emu Plains, Parramatta, Silverwater and Cessnock gaols. In 1985, Sr M. Germanus McQuillan was presented with a citation for her prison work spanning thirty years

In the middle 1980's the Department of Corrective Services recognised the value of ministry to inmates, families and staff and paid Churches to provide Chaplains not only at Long Bay but also at other Gaols in NSW. In 1998, Sr Adele Cottrell Dormer and in 1999 Sr Claudette Palmer were appointed and formally accredited as Chaplains at Silverwater Metropolitan Remand Centre and Mulawa Womens' prison respectively.

In 1987 Sr Maureen Walters was appointed as the Assistant Director of Nursing at the new Long Bay Prison Hospital – a very new and different role for a Sister at Long Bay.

In 1988 I was appointed as the first Administrator of Chaplaincy. Chaplains were somewhat isolated in various gaols and I saw the need to create a formal Chaplaincy Service, one that would have a 'strong voice' within the Department and one that would be listened to through their advocacy for a more just and compassionate system. Chaplains were to become a 'voice for the prisoners' and the Department invariably listened to their concerns.

As I continue in my role as Administrator of Corrective Services Chaplaincy, I am also a representative of the Bishops on the Civil Chaplaincies Advisory Committee and I continue to be actively involved in International Prison Chaplaincy Associations. Apart from all the Administrative requirements which fill my day, there will always be time for that which is nearest to my heart – being a 'carer for the carers'. My day to day interaction with the staff of Corrective Services NSW, the Churches and most importantly the Chaplains, always takes priority over the 'forms and files' that daily rise in neat, mountainous piles on my desk and which demand my attention!



Responding to Worldwide needs and overseas Missions

Some memories of my time in New Guinea

By Jean Montgomery rsc

I was missioned to go to Megiar, Papua New Guinea, during November 1970 and at the end of January 1971, after a day's journey, I arrived at Madang, where I was warmly welcomed by Srs Catherine Tierney and Kathleen Fanning and then travelled another 40 miles on a dirt and pot-holed road, until we finally arrived at Megiar. The next morning, I began my missionary endeavour by fainting during Sunday Mass! The only part I can remember about that is being dragged out of the church by Catherine Tierney!

I was given Standard 6 and those children were wonderful to teach. They wanted so much to learn and were totally co-operative. However, as High Schools had limited spaces, only a small percentage of the class could go on to further education. After a year or two, Catherine Tierney, (who was the Area School Inspector) started a Night School for those who missed out on High School. This was a great success and the children loved coming at night. It meant teaching both day and night, but for the pride and joy it gave the children, the extra work was well worth it.

On Saturdays I visited the villages, many of which were quite a distance away and on the sides of mountains. I arranged for children to come down to the road and take me up to their village. On the way they guided me as to where I should walk so that I would not tread on a snake! They knew where all the snake nests were. Their parents were so welcoming and to help me communicate with them, the children helped me to use Pidgin English.

The families grew all their food. There were no shops. As poor as they were, I did not ever leave a village without having been given some kaikai (food – mainly their own home-grown sweet potato).



Top left: Srs Jean and Kathleen with the Megiar boys' band.

Bottom left: Sr Jean with two village elders.

Top right: Travelling by horseback with Sr Catherine.

Bottom right: The Megiar Community – Srs Catherine Tierney, Jean and Kathleen Fanning.



As Sr Catherine was away most of the time visiting schools and helping the indigenous teachers, Sr Kathleen and I, along with 12 indigenous teachers taught at Megiar School which was within the Megiar Catholic Mission. Kathleen taught Standard 1. We had some funny experiences! Kathleen told me that she had decided to do some revision of previous religion lessons. She had asked the class if they could remember the names of the first man and woman. One little girl quickly put up her hand and answered: 'Dick and Dora'!! (These were the names of the two children in their class reader!) I remember needing to talk to a Kindergarten teacher one afternoon. When I walked into the room, all the children were asleep on the floor and the teacher was asleep on her desk! I had to gently wake her!

Community life was good and I loved being at Megiar. However, I was getting bouts of malaria which were becoming more frequent. I had already started taking quinine tablets before I left Sydney and was taking them every week at Megiar. On one occasion I ended up at the hospital (3 miles from Megiar) which was run by the Holy Spirit Sisters. I was given a huge injection of quinine and told I would have a lot of malaria from then on. This proved true and over the next 3 years, malaria took such a toll of me that I became very weak and could hardly walk from the convent to the school. Finally Sr Catherine told me I would have to leave Megiar and return to Australia. This was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do in my entire life. I thought I would be in Megiar for years!



Some Reflections on my Missionary Journeys: Part 2

By Karan Varker rsc

In 1997 when Bishop Bernard O'Grady asked the assistance of a Sister of Charity in setting up a Catechetical program for his diocese of Gizo in the Western Province of Solomon Islands, I was requested to do so. When I arrived in the capital, Honiara, the custom officers stamped my passport with my departure date as being two days before my arrival. When, at the airport, I realised their mistake the custom officers had already left! Eventually, the wonderful local Dominican Sisters came for me and one who was the Immigration Officer's cousin took me to him to have my passport fixed. The next day when I returned to the airport to fly to Gizo, I was informed the plane 'was broken'. Eventually I arrived.



The catechetical task in Gizo was challenging because a program had to be developed which was appropriate to the customs and culture of the people. It was always hot. Food was at times an issue and there was little meat. However fish was plentiful. I lived with the lovely local Dominican Sisters on an island which had little water and at one time the sisters had to dig a well which we used for everything. The malaria mosquito was always a threat and as on Bougainville, the crocodiles were ever present.

Each day I travelled to work, not by car, but in a 'tinnie', the usual mode of transport, even when I had to give seminars to teachers on the distant islands. This was all right when the open sea was calm, but when it was rough I prayed. "Dear God, please don't let me die in the sea. I just want to die in my bed!"

In 1998, I was missioned to St Theresa's, American Samoa, as principal in an American system where primary schools are from Kindergarten to Year 8. Here I had the privilege of again ministering to amazing Polynesian children who greeted me with an American accent. Despite heat, flooding, lack of finance and insufficient classroom space, we were able to offer quality education to the students. In 2001 and 2003, I again returned to Gizo to help in the development of the Catholic Education System of the Diocese and of a Catholic Education Handbook.

In all of my overseas missionary journeys, I have found that, in these cultures, one very much depended on the goodness of the local people for one's survival. So I am indebted to such wonderful people as the Dominican Sisters of the Solomon Islands, Beata Jio, Education Officer, Gizo, Mary Mouri, teacher at St Mary's, Asitavi, and Malia Losalia Mulipola, SMSM, Principal of St Mary's College, Viamoso, Samoa, for the friendship, colour and fond memories with which they have enriched to my life.

Srs Catherine and Kathleen were wonderful missionaries. No one will ever know the love and commitment they had for the people of PNG. Catherine gave the indigenous teachers so much help – even travelling to the most remote parts of the country, sleeping in dirty old sheds and eating whatever food she could find. Kathleen attended to sick children – children with tropical diseases on their faces, arms and legs. She even managed to get an arrow out of a child's leg, which had gone through from one side to the other! I thank God for their wonderful example of loving to the extreme.

The people of New Guinea were gentle, peaceful people. They knew that the future of NG was changing rapidly and wanted the best for their children. Consequently they were so grateful for whatever we could do for them and taught their children to be respectful and polite.

The people of Megiar will always have a place in my heart.




175 Year Anniversary Celebrations


31st May 2014

Brisbane

Saturday 31 May 2014 was truly a day of festival and joy for all the RSCs who had gathered together with their families, friends, co-workers and supporters in St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane, to celebrate and to give thanks to God for 175 years serving in Australia, impelled by the love of Christ. Over 1300 people shared our joy and thanksgiving. Those who arrived early were able to enjoy the Historical Display in the Francis Rush Hall organised by Sr Christine Henry with the assistance of the Archivist and Mission Executive of the Health Services. An intuitive portrayal of the First Five Women Religious in Australia by the artist Hazel Cope was on public display for the first time. The painting depicts the five Sisters as they may have looked when they arrived in the Colony.

Each Sister was given a corsage of white Singapore Orchids trimmed with the Congregational colours as she arrived at the Cathedral. A group photograph was taken at 11.00am.

The Mt St Michael's Drama Students silently took up their positions on the Sanctuary steps and at 11.28am, the passage from the Prophet Zephaniah was proclaimed and Aunt Joan Hendriks on behalf of the local indigenous peoples welcomed us into their country. Soft Irish music played by a group of three Irish musicians filled the Cathedral as Sr Annette  carrying the Queensland 175 Years  Candle and accompanied by 7 year  old Vada Wardlaw holding the Congregational Candle, made their way down the centre aisle to the Sanctuary where Annette took a light from the Paschal Candle and lit the 175 Years Candle and from this and then lit the Candle held by Vada signifying the handing on of our charism to the future generation.

The telling of the story in narrative, mime and dance began. The 'Five Sisters'  ed as Irish Widows with raffia woven into their chignons to represent short brimmed hats worn to protect their complexion against the sun, were called forth and selected passages from Dr Ullathorne's autobiography gave the background to the Australian Mission. As each 'Sister' was named, the item she



Top right: Srs Colleen Noon and Elizabeth Dodds leaving the Cathedral.

Bottom left: Sisters gathered outside the Brisbane Cathedral after the joyous ceremony.

The Lord your God will exult with joy over you; he will renew you by his love; he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.

Zephaniah 3:18

was carrying down the aisle was explained and followed by a quote from the Letters of Mary Aikenhead. The items were the original Constitutions and the Rules of the Summary, the Douay Bible given by Mary Aikenhead, M.M. John Cahill's brass Crucifix, a cincture and set of Large Rosary Beads and a white apron with a key attached reminiscent of the ritual in our pre-Vatican 11 Ceremony of reception as Novices. These items were placed as a display on the Sanctuary.

Five women are dancing, dancing circles of hope... the lovely Sacred Circle Dance was the preliminary to the journey on the Francis Spaight. The forming of the ship in full sail, the rough sea voyage culminating in the docking at Sydney Harbour and the ministry at Parramatta held the congregation spell-bound. The Mt St Michael's Dancers and Drama Students were brilliant. Our story was told and the challenge of the Five Cs – Competence, Compassion, Confidence, Commitment and Conscience – was given as the 'Five Sisters' exited the Cathedral in five different directions, each taking with her, as she moved from the centre of the Sanctuary, a four-metre length of coloured fabric, held also by five 'Convict women' who followed after.

The entrance procession was led by five dancers with four-metre hand-painted silken banners – these were the new generation sharing in the charism and ministry of the Sisters of Charity in Australia. Following them were the banners from the Schools commenced by the Sisters. These were followed by those of Health Care Facilities then the Downs and West Community Support. 18 Priests and four Bishops preceded Archbishop Mark Coleridge into the Cathedral. The well-known hymns allowed all to join in, and the Cathedral reverberated with the sound of voice, pipe organ and trumpets.

Queensland Sisters read the first and second readings of the Feast of the Visitation and the Prayers of Intercession while the Responsorial Psalm was sung. Archbishop Mark Coleridge in his homily paid tribute to all Congregations of Women Religious:

".... These five women, the first Sisters of Charity, were also the first women religious to come to these shores, and the historic significance of that is inestimable. The Congregations of Apostolic Women Religious have in fact been, in Australia, the prime evangelisers. ...We owe these women

an un-payable debt of gratitude, and when I say 'we' I don't just mean the church, for that is stating the obvious, but Australia owes these women, the Sisters of Charity, an un-payable debt of gratitude. Without the seminal contribution of apostolic women religious in the Catholic Church, Australia would be unrecognisably different and a far more brutal place."

The Sisters' renewed their Vows before the Offertory and the singing of the Caspar Ett *Magnificat* which had been brought to Australia by the first Sisters concluded the Liturgy of the Word. Miriam Townsley, Director of Music at Mt St Michael's, was able to source the original musical accompaniment and so our treasured *Magnificat* was sung as it had been originally composed in 1825 – SATB. It was truly magnificent as the male voices of the Cathedral Choir gave it an added dimension.

The trio of Irish musicians played while gifts were brought to the altar. The lovely Silver Chalice that Mary Aikenhead sent out with the first Sisters was used at this Mass. In her address after Communion, Sr Annette Cunliffe thanked the people of Queensland for their 94 years of support to the Sisters of Charity and also everyone involved with the preparation for our day of Festival and celebration. The Blessing of St Clare was imparted by the Archbishop and as Sr Leone Wittmack with her drum led the singing of the Nigerian version of the *Charity of Christ*, the Sisters, with the portrait of the *First Five Women Religious in Australia* bringing up the vanguard, processed out of the Cathedral to the deafening applause of those who had gathered to share this celebration with us. Handel's *March from Scipio* brought this event to its conclusion.

In the grounds of the Cathedral Precinct refreshments were served by catering staff, assisted by Hospitality Students from Mt St Michael's College. The left-overs were sent to Rosies and to St Vincent de Paul so later that evening the homeless on the streets of Brisbane shared our celebration.

The celebrations of this wonderful day continued on at a celebratory dinner that evening where the Sisters gathered to share the memories and to enjoy each other's company. It was truly a day of festival and God was dancing with shouts of joy for us and for all those wonderful women who have preceded us in the past 175 years.

The website of the Archdiocese of Brisbane has archived the webcast of our celebration www.bne.catholic.net.au/webcast under 'Recent Highlights'

175 Year Anniversary Celebrations at St Stephen's Catholic Church, Tea Gardens

History converged at St Stephen's Catholic Church recently when parishioners and representatives of the local community celebrated 175 years of the Sisters of Charity commencing their ministry in Australia. The Pastoral Coordinator of the Myall Coast Catholic Parish, Sister Margaret Valentine, is a Sister of Charity and the Parish gathered to show their gratitude and respect for the commitment and loving dedication she gives to the Parish.

Four Sisters of Charity travelled from Sydney and interstate to join with the Parish in a joyous celebration of Eucharist. The church was adorned with symbols reflecting the story of the first five sisters who arrived in Sydney on New Year's Eve in 1838 and whose ministries involved caring for the early settlers in the areas of health, education and visitation to those imprisoned. This charism is still lived by the Sisters of Charity today.

After the sharing of Eucharist, the sound of music and lively chatter filled the air as 100 people enjoyed a cocktail party in the Parish Centre. During the evening a PowerPoint presentation of Sister Margaret's life was shown, drawing delighted laughter from the audience. The history vibe continued when a locally researched and compiled book was launched by one of the researchers, Paul Carter. *The Story of St Stephen's Church, Tea Gardens – 125 years of Tradition*, pays homage to the forebears of St Stephen's Church from 1889 to 2014. A historic photo display, gave people an opportunity to embrace yester year on the Myall Coast.

The Sisters of Charity and St Stephen's forebears have left a rich and blessed history for which we give thanks.

By Rhonda Bobako (Publicity Officer)



Top left: Five Sisters – Maureen Heffernan, Margaret Valentine, Jean Montgomery, Libbey Byrne and Margaret Fitzgerald.
Bottom right: A Parishioner's model of the Five Pioneer Sisters arriving in Sydney.



175 Year Anniversary Special Celebrations

Continued from page 09

20th-22nd June 2014

Hobart

One hundred and sixty seven years ago, the Sisters of Charity were welcomed to Hobart Town. Over the three days of Celebration in the 175th Anniversary Year since our arrival in Australia, every aspect of the ministry of the Sisters in Tasmania was acknowledged, remembered and celebrated.

Forty one Sisters made the trip from other States to join Srs Josephine Cannell, and Anne Turner, past and present colleagues, those who have shared our ministry and friends who recalled their earliest encounters with the Sisters.

The first visit was to Mount Carmel College at Sandy Bay on the morning of Friday 20th. The changes and additions to the College are truly amazing for those who had not been there in recent years.

Students from both the Primary and Secondary schools conducted tours and some of us were able to visit the Quorn Street Convent, which now houses the Chapel and the offices of the College Executive. The tours included visits to the Music Rooms, Domestic Science Department and classrooms. This was followed by Morning Tea, prepared and served by students.

A Special Assembly was attended by the whole College Community. Some of the highlights were the specially prepared prayers and the dramatization of the arrival and ministry of the Sisters to the sick, to students and prisoners written by Students, the performance of an original song 'The Southern Land' composed by two staff members and sung by a year 10 music student. Sr Maria Wheeler a former Principal spoke on behalf of the Sisters.

Here, as at each venue, a Commemorative bronze Plaque was presented to the College by Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

The next visit was to the Cascade Female Factory, opened in 1828, a cold, stark place of incredible cruelty and sorrow where the early Sisters had ministered. The Factory was closed in 1877, but regular tours are still conducted. A bronze plaque was presented here as well.

A complete change of experience came at the next visit, which was to St Aloysius' Catholic College, Kingston. Here again, the celebration began with a Welcome by the Principal, Mrs Elaine Doran, a Prayer Service and singing of the College Song and National Anthem. The story of the Sisters was told in a slide presentation and a Power Point featuring paper models and cardboard ships. The children were not the only ones who enjoyed that!

Four Sisters were present who had been Principals of St Aloysius, Sr Eileen Thynne, the first Principal, Sr Virginia Wilkinson, Sr Edith King and Sr Cate O'Brien, the last RSC Principal. Each Sister present was given a gift bag with most of the contents made by the students.

The Mass in Thanksgiving was celebrated on Saturday afternoon, 21st June at St Joseph's Church, where the Pioneer Sisters worshipped and next to the Convent, which was to be the Sisters' residence for over a century. The principal celebrant was Archbishop Julian Porteous and he was joined by many priests who had been involved in the ministries of the Sisters.

There was a distinctly local involvement in the Liturgy – all Tasmanian born Sisters present took part in the Entrance Procession, a photo of the three Pioneer Sisters was carried by the great great grand niece of Mother Xavier Williams, Rosalie Raftis; the Chalice used had belonged to Bishop Willson, who invited the Sisters to Tasmania, the soloist and Choir were from Mount Carmel College and colleagues and former students did the Readings and Intercessions.



In his homily, Archbishop Porteous highlighted the manner in which the Sisters implemented the words of St Paul, chosen by Mary Aikenhead as the motto of the Congregation – “the love of Christ impels us.” He emphasised the generosity of the Sisters in responding to the many needs of the poor, first in Sydney and then in Tasmania. Archbishop Porteous concluded:-

Let us allow the love of Christ to so stir within us, that we will keep alive the spirit that inspired Mary Aikenhead and those pioneer Sisters who, having consecrated their lives to the service of the poor, brought the love of Christ to those in great need. May the love of Christ impel us all.

Many old friendships were renewed at the Afternoon Tea, which followed, prepared and served by the students and staff of Mount Carmel College for the preparation and serving.

That evening the Sisters gathered for a celebratory dinner where thanks were offered to Cathy Meese, Josephine Cannell and Anne Turner who were the main organisers.

On Sunday morning we were privileged to gather at the graveside of our Sisters at Cornelian Bay where all Sisters who died in Tasmania are buried, including the three pioneers. This ceremony and the Mass that followed were presided over by Adrian Doyle, Emeritus Archbishop of Hobart. Archbishop Doyle took the theme of the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ and Jesus's words at the Last Supper and invited us to be blessed and broken...in memory of Jesus.

Archbishop Doyle quoted from the homily given by the former Archbishop, Justin Simmonds at the Mass for the Centenary of the arrival of the Sisters in Hobart which spoke of “the tiny seed of religion planted in most inhospitable soil by those three honoured ladies” that had “taken firm root in Tasmania”.

Following the Mass, there was a celebratory lunch before most Sisters left to return to “the mainland” though some remained for plaque presentations at South Hobart and New Norfolk.

It would seem that the mission and values of the Sisters of Charity are in very good hands to continue into the future.

Opposite page, top to bottom: Procession to Chapel; Prayerful Liturgy at the Graveside; Three Tasmanians – Sisters Josephine Cannell, Anne Turner and Cecilia Kinsella; Enjoying Morning Tea; Re-enactment by students at Sandy Bay; Group photo of sisters and students at Sandy Bay.

3rd May 2014

Katoomba

Even though the mountain weather decided to turn on a typical mid-winter day, it in no way lessened the sense of celebration among all those who attended the Katoomba celebration of 175 years of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Australia .

Sisters Mary Maguire and Colleen Holohan welcomed many Sisters and friends to lunch at 227 Leura Mall, and that itself, was a warm, happy gathering.

Then, at the Parish Hall at Katoomba, guests and Sisters began to gather for the liturgy which was to begin at 2pm. To some it was a reunion with past parishioners and pupils, as well as past teachers. The focal point in the Hall was the special Congregational candle on a decorated table.

Mary's introduction outlined the history of the Sisters of Charity in the Blue Mountains, which had begun back in 1901, and continues up to the present day. She also stated that the liturgy aimed to provide a sense of prayerful celebration and thanksgiving.

A part of the liturgy was a candle ritual in which a small candle was lit from the large main candle. This was passed among six people – representing Sisters of previous years, lay teachers from previous years, past pupils, present pupils, a present Sister and a present teacher, the representative being Mr Mark Geerligns, the current Principal of St Canice's. Each had a short statement to make, acknowledging the efforts, gifts and inspiration of those who went before them.

Afternoon tea followed the liturgy and it was a good chance for more reunions and a browse among the various folders containing photos and records of the past, as well as many framed photos of past events at Mt St Mary's and St Canice's schools.

It was such a happy occasion and another chance to give thanks to God for the blessings over the years.

By Barbara Smith



Top: Sisters gathered in Hall for the Liturgy.

Middle: Former Principals, Sisters Edith King and Virginia Wilkinson take part in the Liturgy.

Bottom: Sr Mary Maguire (centre back) welcomes guests – Srs Jennifer Fahey and Elizabeth Dodds (standing) and Virginia Wilkinson and Jean Montgomery (seated).

Obituaries

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

Christine Madden rsc



PATRICIA MARY MADDEN, known lovingly by us as 'Sr Chris', was born on 12th July 1930. Joseph and Jessie Madden were the proud parents of their two daughters – Chris and her sister Margaret. The family lived at Ashfield and the girls attended Bethlehem College, Ashfield.

Christine entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate on 2 July 1949 and was professed on 24 January 1952. For approximately thirty years, she mostly taught in Secondary schools in Sydney – Potts Point, Hurstville, Ashfield and Liverpool. A large number of her ex-students came to her Requiem Mass. Christine had a number of diverse roles within the Congregation as Regional Superior, Councillor, Pastoral Care to our aged sisters and up until the time of her death, she was the Congregational Bursar.

Perhaps one of the hallmarks of Christine's life was her simplicity, her deep compassion and ability to reach out to others. It was easy to be with her. She was always interested in people and she rejoiced and suffered with them.

There was much pride for her family. Chris loved the opportunity to be with them for family gatherings and on special occasions. The family was particularly grateful for the loving care Christine received in the last months of her life.

Christine died on 8th March at St Joseph's Village. We give thanks to God for Chris, and ask that the networks of support she began on earth, will continue with her support for us from Heaven.

Mary Veronica Duffy rsc



MARY VERONICA DUFFY was born on 10th April 1918 in Carlton, Victoria. She was the eldest of the five daughters and two sons of Daniel and Mary Duffy. She attended school at Carlton then CLC East Melbourne.

After Mary Veronica left school she worked as a clerical assistant. She felt called to Religious life and began to make arrangements to enter the convent. However, her brother Danny was stricken with polio and for three years he was nursed at home before his untimely death. Veronica supported her parents and family at that time.

So it was on 2nd February 1942 that Mary Veronica entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate and was professed on 30th August 1944. She would have liked to have become a nurse, but became a teacher and School Principal, ministering in schools in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. She was loved by colleagues and students alike. Her friendly welcome, enthusiasm and willingness to help were greatly appreciated.

While she enjoyed her years of teaching, it was a great joy to her in 1980 when she began a ministry in Pastoral Care at St Vincent's Hospital Fitzroy. She relished this opportunity and continued in it for about ten years.

Mary Veronica and her sister, Eileen, who also became a Sister of Charity, retired to Caritas Christi Kew before moving to Corpus Christi Clayton in 2006. Mary Veronica was in her 96th year when she died at St Vincent's Hospital on 20th March 2014. Throughout her life lived her motto "All for thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, through and with Mary". May she rest in peace.

Tarcisius Donovan rsc



CATHERINE ANNE DONOVAN (TARCISIUS), lovingly known as 'Tarcie' to all of us, was born on 2nd July 1918 the ninth of the twelve children of John and Lucy Donovan at Cabarlah on the Darling Downs, Queensland. Throughout her life, Tarcie spoke of the great pride and joy she had in her family. She was very proud of the fact that, from their farm, they could see the whole of the Lockyer Valley, the trickle of Murphy's Creek and the road to Brisbane! Tarcie epitomised the warm-hearted generosity that typifies the farmers on the Downs.

When three Sisters of Charity stepped from the train at Toowoomba Railway Station in 1920 to begin St Vincent's Hospital, the almost-2-years-old Catherine Donovan was blissfully unaware that, for 78 years, her life would be inextricably bound to the Sisters of Charity. It was 8th December 1935 that Tarcie entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate at Bethania. In reflecting over her life and her profession on 24th August 1938, Tarcie said "The proudest and happiest thing for me is to have been a Sister of Charity". Most of her years of ministering as an Infants Teacher were spent in NSW.

From the late 1980s, she returned to her home State of Queensland, ministering in St Vincent's Hospital Pastoral Care and Outreach in Toowoomba. In June 2012, she moved to Marycrest at Kangaroo Point and up until the time of her death was a loved member of the community at Mt. Olivet.

She was admitted to the Mater Hospital a short time before she died peacefully on 22nd March. We give thanks to God for a true daughter of the Downs who lived her life according to her motto: "Him in all and all in Him".