



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
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Keep in touch

First Profession Celebration of Karen Nguyen



Newly professed Sister of Charity –
Sr Karen Nguyen rsc.

On 5th February 2012, it was with great joy that we celebrated the First Profession of Karen Nguyen, which took place in the newly renovated Congregational Chapel, St. Vincent's, Potts Point.

Many Sisters of Charity from near and far gathered with family, friends and Religious from other Congregations, who had shared formative experiences with Karen over the past two years.

Expressions of gratitude for Karen's generous response to what she has discerned as God's call to live as a Religious Sister of Charity – committed by the Vows of Chastity, Poverty, Obedience and Service of the Poor; along with the generosity of Karen's family in supporting her decision, reflected hope and love for Karen, the Church, the people of God.

Bishop Terry Brady, Father Steven Rigo and Father Pat McAtamney concelebrated the Eucharist. Fathers Steven and Pat have both been significant in supporting Karen, as she responded to the nudgings of grace leading her to this day of First Profession.



Sr Maureen, the cross bearer, leads the procession from the Chapel.

Bishop Terry's heartfelt appreciation of the application by the Sisters of the Congregational motto '*Caritas Christi urget nos*', witnessed in places of Ministry over many years, focused attention on some of the past influence of the Sisters of Charity – an influence of a compassion flowing into the future, personified in Karen's desire to serve the poor – a compassion evident in current and future colleagues.



Bishop Terry receives gifts of bread and wine from Karen, her sister Amanda, and brother Phillip.

The Profession ceremony was moving in its prayerful dignity and sense of joy, enhanced by the choir from St Vincent's College, and Cantors, Sister Angela Burke and Father Brian Mascord.

We rejoiced with Karen, giving thanks for all that this day signified.



Pictured here left to right is her father Van Thai, her sister Amanda, herself, her brother Phillip, her sister Sophie and her mother Phi San.

Golden Jubilarians

Sisters Elizabeth Dodds and Annette Cunliffe rsc

Sisters Elizabeth Dodds and Annette Cunliffe celebrated their Golden Jubilee of Religious Profession on Saturday 21st January, with a large number of Sisters of Charity from all the Eastern States of Australia in the Congregational Chapel, St. Vincent's, Potts Point. Family members and friends also came from Sydney and from other States.

The Eucharist was celebrated by Fr Stephen Sinn SJ. In his homily he explored the story of Jesus' washing the feet of the disciples at the Last Supper from the Gospel of John.

Elizabeth and Annette renewed their Vows during the Eucharist and presented Papal Blessings to each other. The celebrations were simple but wonderfully joy-filled. Sisters, family members and friends participated in the Mass.

The Eucharist was followed by a lovely afternoon tea in St Vincent's College dining room, beautifully decorated for the occasion.

During afternoon tea Mr Peter Linkson, Sister Elizabeth's brother-in-law, spoke about all that Elizabeth has meant to the family and to those for whom she has ministered.

He then proposed the toast, with Elizabeth responding and speaking of her gratitude for all that she has received and for her family and friends.

Mrs Penelope Kerr, Sister Annette's sister then proposed her toast. Annette responded, again recalling God's blessings in her life; and her debt of gratitude to family, colleagues, friends and students; and especially the Sisters of Charity. All present raised their hands and shared a blessing for Elizabeth and Annette. They jointly cut the special Jubilee cake, which was then shared amongst the guests.



- 1 Happy Jubilarians, Srs Annette and Liz.
- 2 Sr Liz gathered with her family and community.
- 3 Sr Liz with Natalie and her sister, Helen.
- 4 The two Jubilarians present each other with their Papal Blessings.
- 5 Sr Annette gathered with her family, her sister, Penny and husband David, beside her and their grandchild, Mary behind them.
- 6 All enjoy Afternoon Tea, especially baby Mary and her special great aunt, Sr Joan Jurd (far right).



Golden Jubilarian

Sister Dorothy Bayliss rsc



The Golden Jubilee celebrations for Sister Dorothy Bayliss (which occurred on 8th August 2011) were delayed until Saturday 17th December to allow Fr Tadeusz, a Jesuit priest who has for many years ministered in Zambia, to be the celebrant of the Eucharist.

The celebrations were held in the community at Berala with just Dorothy's community, two of her fellow Jubilarians, former community members, two nursing friends and Sisters Elizabeth Dodds and Annette Cunliffe present.



A simple but moving Eucharistic celebration was followed by morning tea. Dorothy and her fellow Jubilarians renewed their vows during the Eucharist and the decorations reflected Dorothy's ministry in many missionary areas. During the Eucharist, Dorothy was presented with a Papal Blessing (pictured above).

Silver Jubilarian

Sister Colleen Mills rsc

Sister Colleen Mills celebrated her Silver Jubilee of Religious Profession on 20th December 2011, the actual anniversary, at St Thomas More School, Ruse where she is currently in ministry in a pastoral home/school liaison role. A delicious morning tea was shared by the principal and staff of the school; members of Colleen's family; former colleagues and Sisters of Charity, including those who had mentored her early in her life as a Sister of Charity; and Sr Annette Cunliffe, the Congregational Leader.

Fr Anthony Daly, the Parish Priest, later celebrated a Eucharist of thanksgiving for Colleen's 25 years as a Professed Sister of Charity, with Mr Peter Turner and Mr Paul McCann from Wollongong Catholic Education Office joining Colleen, her family, friends and fellow staff members. Colleen used the readings and hymns that she had chosen for her First Profession, 25 years ago.

Fr Tony's homily on the gospel – Jesus' words about the vine and branches – was both challenging and consoling and he concluded with a special blessing for Colleen.



Sr Liz Costigan, the Jubilarian, Sr Colleen and Colleen's two sisters, Bernadette and Kate were there for the celebration.

After the Mass, Mr Don Spencer, the Principal, made a presentation to Colleen. He and other staff members spoke of her wonderful contribution to the life of the school. Colleen responded and expressed her sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the welcome she has received at the school and for the good wishes, the gift and the hosting of the celebration.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

From the Congregational Archives

Sisters of Charity early ministry at Katoomba

Bishop Polding told Mary Aikenhead of his concern for the Australian Aborigines. Her reaction was to send a black crucifix with her sisters to Australia. While they were at Parramatta, Polding sent the early community a small Aboriginal girl who was loved by the sisters until Polding had her returned to her family in Moreton Bay. In modern times, S.M. Ignatius Jenkins was a friend to Aboriginal women at Redfern, while Sr Anne Louise Hemingway and M. Josephine Hodges lived with the Aboriginal community in Cherbourg, Queensland. Few have heard, however, of the visits to the camp of the Aboriginal people near Katoomba by Sr M. Agnes Fitzgerald, aunt of S.M. Bernadette Shand.

Sr Agnes Fitzgerald recorded in her memoirs (penned in 1940) her visits to this camp just outside of Katoomba in 1902. She was teaching music at Mt St Mary's at the time (then located in Katoomba Street), and was called to baptise a dying baby in the camp when the priest was away.

Research undertaken by local anthropologist Dianne Johnson in collaboration with the Gully Traditional Owners, has allowed the Archives to ascertain that the camp visited was known as 'The Gully'. The area is now called 'Garguree', but it was a continuous place of occupation for the Aboriginal community until their eviction in 1957.

Johnson's research tells us that this West Katoomba Gully community lived together from at least 1894 until 1957, and consisted of Gundungurra and Darug families. Some non-Aboriginal people settled there as well after the closure of the shale-mining settlement at Nellie's Glen in 1903.

Sr Agnes records having contact with the Lynches, the Hughes and the Coopers – all members of the Gundungurra people. All names are recorded in the *Baptism and Burial Register* of the Katoomba Congregational Church who were also ministering in the area from 1901.

Clockwise from top:

Gundungurra elder and former 'Gully' resident, Aunty Dawn Colless, performs a water ritual at the ceremony to declare 'The Gully' an Aboriginal Place, 2002.

An undated photograph of Sr Agnes Fitzgerald.

An early photograph of 'The Gully'.



Sr Agnes was known to the Aboriginal community as 'our little Sister' ... and made herself available to 'The Gully' community at any time of the day.

'The Gully' community were hidden to a large extent by the bushy surrounds, and Sr Agnes describes jumping over logs and rough stones to arrive at a very simple home with mud floor and a log fire, in bitterly cold conditions.

In those days, 'The Gully' children were born at home with the aid of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal midwives, but infant mortality was high. Sr Agnes describes Mrs Cooper as "a real apostle in seeing that babies got baptism in cases where they were dying". Sr Agnes also realised that Mrs Cooper was educated in a convent school when she was able to recite the baptism rites well enough to convince Sr Agnes she could perform the ceremony herself.

Di Johnson's research reveals that Mrs Cooper was in fact Mrs Alice Cooper (1848-1924), a widow who brought her children up from the Megalong Valley to live in 'The Gully' about 1901.

Sr Agnes was known to the Aboriginal community as 'our little Sister' (due to her short stature) and made herself available to 'The Gully' community at any time of the day. She always travelled with a companion, and came prepared with food to make a meal for the mother and children. The Sisters also ran a Bush Sunday School in Katoomba for willing Aboriginal children around the same time.

'The Gully' was declared an official Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)* in 2002.

Denise Corrigan, Archives Manager

Sr Mary Freeman rsc

Obituary



friends during her long life – 73 years of which as a Sister of Charity.

Born in Sydney, Mary was the fourth of five children, two boys and three girls. James, the oldest became the Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney (1971-1983). In many ways he and Mary were alike in personality and their relationship was very close. After her primary schooling at the Parish school at Elizabeth Bay and her secondary studies at St Vincent's College, Potts Point, Mary decided that God was calling her to be a Sister of Charity. A year after leaving school, she entered 'Bethania', our Novitiate at Potts Point and there, on completion of her training in 1937, made her Profession of Vows. Mary then began to prepare for her ministry, by beginning studies to qualify for a Teacher's Certificate.

Sister Mary's first appointment as a teacher was to the Parish school at Hurstville, and in the following years to Auburn, East Melbourne, New Norfolk, Tasmania. After further studies at the University of Tasmania, Mary commenced teaching in our secondary colleges – CLC Melbourne, St Vincent's, Potts Point, St Mary's Katoomba and Bethlehem College, Ashfield. For twelve years, Mary served as a Councillor on our Leadership Council. In 1970 she became a Member of the Australian College of Education.

Mary spent the last eight years in her school ministry on the office staff at Our Lady of Mt Carmel School at Mt Pritchard, where her interest in people, her kindness and readiness to help in whatever way she could, soon won the respect and love of the children, staff and parishioners.

Even in retirement, Mary tried to keep in touch with her past students and colleagues by attending reunions and functions at the Colleges where she had taught. As she became older, Mary's diminishing hearing did not prevent her keeping 'up to date' with all her sporting interests – tennis, cricket and Rugby League, or from taking part in activities at the Village.

Just as her deep faith, sincerity, kindness and good humour made Mary a pleasing companion to live with in our communities, it was also those qualities that endeared her to the staff and fellow residents during her years in retirement at the Village.

How blessed we are and how pleasing it is, to have known someone who has left us with such memories of her goodness.

Sister Mary Freeman (known to many as Sister M. Scholastica) died, aged 93, on 12th January, 2012 at St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn. Mary had lived nearby at St Joseph's Village, Auburn since her retirement from active ministry 18 years ago.

Those who are hearing this news for the first time will be saddened by it, but soon consoled by the happy and loving memories they have of Sister Mary who, with her easy manner, wit and good humour, made many



Celebrating 90 years of Service

St Vincent's Toowoomba

On 9th February 2012, a Re-Commitment and Commissioning of Pastoral Carers Ecumenical Service was held on the occasion of the 20th World Day of the Sick, 11th February 2012. It recalled 90 years of Service of the Sisters of Charity to the people of Toowoomba.

In the Community Prayers of Intercession, this prayer was prayed:

God of tenderness and universal compassion, we give thanks for all the health and aged care facilities that were established to minister to and care for the sick, elderly, marginalised and dying. This year we especially acknowledge St Vincent's Hospital and the Sisters of Charity as they celebrate 90 years of service to the people of Toowoomba and surrounding districts.

St Columba's College, Essendon

Celebrating 115 years

St Columba's College was founded 115 years ago. This anniversary was celebrated on Wednesday 29th February 2012, with a Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral with Bishop Tim Costelloe as chief celebrant. At the conclusion of the concelebrated Mass, the Principal, April Honeyman, thanked all who had joined in this special celebration – the Bishop and the priests from neighbouring parishes; her staff (past and present); students (past and present) and their families, and the special guests. In particular she thanked Mr Bill Fitzsimons and Mrs Joanne Watkins who worked so hard in preparing the liturgy and without wanting to single any other people out, she went on to say:

"On this particular occasion, however, there is one group of people I wish to single out... and that group is, of course, the many Sisters of Charity who are with us tonight. Our scriptures both Hebrew and Christian – tell stories of many people who are called by God to do great things – the call in Hebrew is 'Lekh, LEKHA'. Abraham, Moses, Mary and the Apostles were all called in this way, and so was Mary Aikenhead, the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity. She was a young Irish woman from an unremarkable background, and yet someone who, in responding to this call from God, unleashed a legacy of love and compassion, that would travel to the four corners of the world. One of those corners was, of course, Australia.

From that quiet whisper of God's voice heard in the intimacy of Mary Aikenhead's heart, would come a mighty chorus of women's voices ... her Sisters of Charity:

Voices

- *speaking for the silenced;*
- *comforting and reassuring the poor;*
- *advocating for change;*
- *questioning and searching for new and better ways to be, and to do God's work;*
- *imagining and dreaming;*
- *of women – heard in strength, in certainty, in faithfulness, and in service.*

Since our foundation in 1897, this call has been a cornerstone of St Columba's College. It has shaped us and impelled us to action. It has taught us what it means to walk in the ways of those who heard that call. It has given us courage to believe that "just because it hasn't been done before, doesn't mean it can't be done now".

It has taught us

- *that creativity demands critique and challenge;*
- *that to renew, requires vision and energy;*
- *that to transform requires dedication and selflessness;*
- *that compassion has to be drawn from our deepest resources, not from those most readily to hand.*

So, to our very own National Living Treasures – all the Sisters of Charity here tonight, I'd like you to leave this celebration in the knowledge that your lives and actions and your response to God's call, have ignited a flame in the lives of the young women of St Columba's College, past and present, a flame that will continue to burn brightly for all to see.



Two other past Principals – Srs Patricia Nunan and Helga Neidhart were in the Offertory Procession.

Go, with our eternal gratitude and with our deep and abiding respect for the living example of your lives. Go, with much joy and celebration, confident that what you have begun, what you have given in humility, will continue to inspire these young women.

Go, in the certain knowledge

- *that you have created the smiles on the faces of each student;*
- *that you have encouraged learning and achievement of the highest standard;*
- *that you have built a robust and enduring community of faith, compassion and love;*
- *that you have inspired us to 'transform the Church and renew the world'.*
- *that you were uncommon women for your time, for our time and for all time. With that continuous thread of uncommonness, you have enabled us to be faithful and strong in our own ways, in our own contexts.*

As you leave the Cathedral tonight, you will be following the two young women who lead our College today, Shelby and Molly. They are proud to link their hands with yours, to learn from the paths that you have walked, to continue to listen to God's call and respond. I'd like to invite everyone to join me in showing our love and appreciation of these uncommon women to whom we owe so much."



St Columba's College past Principal – Sr Margaret Dwyer.

The Sisters of Charity

Remote and Rural Stall

When the Sisters of Charity Remote and Rural Group (R&R Group) began in late 2007, a decision was made to run a raffle followed by a stall in the next week, with the money raised to be used as 'starter money' for the venture. St Vincent's Private Hospital allowed the use of their foyer for a week, and the General Hospital kindly made room for a stall on two Fridays a year. Over the years the R&R Group has been greatly supported and welcomed by the administration, staff, patients and visitors of both hospitals and we publicly thank them all! During this time also, the R&R Group has been most generously supported by the Sisters of Charity Foundation and we sincerely thank this group also.

What does the R&R Group do for the stalls?

The volunteers come together socially to prepare the goods for the stalls and then to sell them. In addition, it presents an opportunity for other interested Sisters of Charity, their relatives and friends, to join the volunteers, and bring in hand crafted gifts to add to the various stalls. With this help the stalls are well stocked with a variety of goods.

A snapshot of our generous volunteers, Prayer and Meeting Room and the Stall with volunteers and customers.

How is the money used?

The money from the raffle and stalls is used for the general running expenses of the R&R Group. Any money over is used for needy rural families. In addition to this, over the period of time the R&R Group has been operating, rural groups have been encouraged to think and act creatively in an attempt to support the local community. Small amounts of 'starter money' have been given to them.

Pictured right is a beautiful old room in a country area used by a Parish group for prayer, meetings and also suitable for a cup of tea and a chat on special occasions.

The Parish Priest, encouraged by the Parish Sister, has supported the idea of a meeting place by helping with the cost of the renovations. The R&R Group assisted with the purchase of the chairs, table and window blind (still to be installed). The fabric and cottons for the seat cushions were made and embroidered by the local women.

There is more to come!



Over the years the R&R Group has been greatly supported and welcomed by the administration, staff, patients and visitors of both hospitals and we publicly thank them all!

Grateful thanks to Sr Eileen

Caritas Christi, Kew bids a fond farewell to Sister Eileen Thynne

After 30 years as a teacher in various schools of the Congregation, Sister Eileen spent two shorter periods in leadership ministries, before expressing her desire to work in a pastoral ministry with the dying. Caritas Christi, Kew, accepted Sister Eileen onto the staff to work with the Pastoral Care Team.

At the end of last year, after 20 years of dedicated service, Sister Eileen decided it was time to retire. A gathering of patients, families and staff was held on 13th December, to bid her farewell, and express appreciation for the service Sister Eileen has given to all at Caritas during those years.

The sincerity and depth of appreciation could be measured by the presence at the gathering of Professor Patricia O'Rourke, CEO St Vincent's Health, Melbourne, and the Directors or Managers of several Departments of Health Services that are in some way connected with Caritas.



All there to express their thanks, were many of the Melbourne-based Sisters of Charity together with current and former staff members, and also patients with their families.

Addressing Sister Eileen directly, Professor O'Rourke said:

"For the past 20 years you have accompanied patients in their last hours, helping to ease their anxiety by your gentle presence and words. You have comforted the families in their loss and supported the nursing staff in their sadness."

Professor O'Rourke then quoted from the foreword by Archbishop Frank Little for *Till the Shades Lengthen*, a history of Caritas Christi, written by Sister Agatha O'Leary in 1987:

"In human suffering, drugs can diminish pain and anguish. But only a human presence, discreet and attentive, especially one driven by the love of Christ, can bring the fullness of human relief."

Sister Eileen was then presented with a silver tray to commemorate her long service at Caritas, and also received gifts from the staff and the patients (pictured left). In response, Sister spoke of how much it had meant to her to care for the dying, of her love for Caritas and expressed her thanks for the love and friendship she had received, especially from the staff.



The Farewell card, silver tray and other beautiful gifts Sr Eileen received.

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