



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF AUSTRALIA

DECEMBER 2016 / VOLUME 16 / NUMBER 4



Keep in touch

Education – in the Beginning and Now!

Apostolate of Love, Sr Margaret Donovan rsc

In 1827 when Archbishop Murray proposed to build a Convent and Schools for the Sisters of Charity in Gardiner Street, Dublin, Mary Aikenhead was intensely interested in the projected schools as she was deeply convinced of the importance of this work. While waiting for the schools to be completed, Mary Aikenhead decided that Sister Xavier Hennessey would be the most capable Sister to be responsible for the organisation of the schools. After being appointed Sr Xavier channelled all her enthusiasm into this important work.

It was only when the school opened at the beginning of 1830 that Sr Xavier realised the magnitude of the challenge before her. All her studies of theories of education, plans for school management and methods now seemed futile. The children, for many reasons, were quite undisciplined and despite all her talents in teaching Sr Xavier felt helpless and chaos reigned. In sharing her sense of failure with Mary Aikenhead she expressed that they needed a man to control them. Immediately, the Foundress, replied:

“Very well then, dear Sister, we’ll get a man. Why not ask the Christian Brothers to help.”

They subsequently met with Brother Ignatius Rice and when he realised how serious her difficulties were, he agreed to send Brother Bernard Duggan to assist. After several months in getting the situation under control, Brother Duggan also conducted classes for the Sisters in the evenings, and with his assistance Sister Xavier compiled a ‘School Government Book.’

In 1840 Mary Aikenhead wrote:

‘It is obvious that we shall always have a greater number of schools than any other institutions for the poor.’

She entrusted Sister Xavier with the work of selecting and training Sisters to be engaged in education.



From the beginning, when Mary Aikenhead sent the first five Sisters to Australia, she recognised the importance of being involved in Education, as amongst the many articles, books etc., they brought with them was a copy of this written method of teaching that the Christian Brothers had assisted Sr Xavier Hennessey with in Dublin. This document became invaluable in assisting the training of the early Sisters in Australia, resulting in Schools and Education becoming a very significant apostolate.

Sisters who are still in the Education system, having shed the responsibility of Principalship, in some cases today, have taken up a pastoral role to support staff and families.

Reflections of St Columba's

Sr Teresita Marcelo reflects on her role at St Columba's College, Essendon

by Sr Tess V. Marcelo rsc

St Columba's College is guided by the traditions and charisms of the Sisters of Charity, encompassed by Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

As the end of the year approaches, it is good to be able to pause from the hectic pace of College life and to reflect on the school year 2016. St Columba's College published a book called *Voices from the Heart*. Each staff member was given a copy for Christmas last year. Throughout this year, the ministry I am involved in at the College reflected what our Principal, April Honeyman, has expressed at the introduction of this book.

In reality, the events, experiences, even "miracles" that happened to me and the St Columba's community are reflected in these:

'...prayer is a powerful means of expressing our faith... The charism of the Sisters of Charity is based on Ignatian spirituality. It gives us a story to enter (daily); a language to speak; a way to pray; and a face of God to see.'

April Honeyman

Each day there is a call to respond to the social, emotional, academic and spiritual needs of the community, particularly the needs relevant to the developmental stage of every young woman in the College, and the needs of others, including the staff. How fortunate I am to be in the midst of all these, with God's help!

One of the teachers gave me a poster which I have placed in front of my desk, and the words surely help when life in the College gets complicated:

'Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you... and always trust in God's ways... it may not be your chosen way...'

I thank God every day for our RSC motto: *"The love of Christ urges us"*.

Mother Ursula Bruton, a Sister of Charity, founded St Columba's College in 1897 after being transferred from St Vincent's College in Sydney, as a way to offer girls in the Essendon area the chance to continue their education.



School's in, but not as we knew it – it's gone high tech!

by Sr Aileen Thomas rsc

It is now twenty eight years since I was appointed to Bethlehem College to introduce a new Computer Programme in school Administration. Over the years I became involved in many aspects of school life and I loved every minute. By the middle of last year I realised perhaps I no longer wanted the responsibility nor the pressure of meeting deadlines but there was one big problem. I couldn't leave Bethlehem. I have often said part of my heart is in each brick of Bethlehem. I need Bethlehem and I hope in some small way Bethlehem needs me. I will never forget the support and kindness of Sr Clare and our Principal Mrs Paula Bounds at this time.

As a Primary teacher I felt I could help those girls who were weak in basic skills. I was warmly welcomed to the Learning Support Team. As I returned to school this year I realise it was 33 years since I had been in a classroom. I asked myself had I gone raving mad. It really is like riding a bike. It all came rushing back and I was soon making flash cards and preparing word building games. Recently a Year 7 student asked me to help her with her Algebra. I loved Algebra and Sr Mark taught me extremely well but that WAS 60 years ago. We agreed that I would check with her teacher first.

Education has changed but "the poor of Christ" are still the same. I am delighted and humbled as I see the efforts of the staff to help these families. Some of my time is spent helping to provide uniforms and even computers where there is a need.



One of the many achievements of this year was the introduction of the Breakfast Club two mornings a week, hopefully before long it will be everyday. About 80 students attend. Sadly we have a few students who just don't have enough food in their homes, others are lacking parental supervision in the morning while some come for the company of their friends. There are bread rolls and fillings for those without lunch. All mix together so nobody knows of anyone's needs. It reminds me of the stories of our Sisters at Bethlehem providing breakfast and lunch during the great depression.

When I started school at Bethlehem in 1951 I would not have imagined that one day I would be the only, and perhaps, the last Sister of Charity on the staff.

As Sisters of Charity we have every reason to still be very proud of Bethlehem because as I have often said, "Bethlehem is in very good hands."

My Involvement in Clemente

by Sr Maria Wheeler rsc

Each week I mentor Clemente students at the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield Campus. My connection with the Clemente goes back to its beginning here in Australia. Most people ask me what is Clemente?

Clemente Course in Humanities was founded by Earl Shorris in America in the 1990s. He believed that the only way out of the poverty cycle was not to reinforce repetition but to learn through the humanities to seek freedom and to learn of reflection not reaction.

Earl Shorris visited Australia in 2003 and I was present at a talk he gave where he spoke about the success of the initial trial of his theory in Lower Manhattan and how there were then numerous centres offering the course in other parts of the USA. I came away from the evening keen to learn more about the programme.

Shortly after Earl Shorris' visit The Australian Catholic University in collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society offered the first Clemente in Australia at the Vincentian Centre at East Sydney. They were given financial assistance from The Sisters of Charity Foundation and the Sydney City Council. This was my first involvement with the programme. The students who attended what was the first university course of its kind, experience multi-disadvantage and social isolation. There are now thirteen centres across Australia offering the course.

In 2014, when I returned to Sydney, I volunteered with the Clemente program and Associate Professor Howard, National Leader, Clemente Australia, asked if I would mentor some of the students at the Strathfield Campus.



The Clemente students feel very comfortable to call and ask for assistance and I suspect to see if there is some cake or chocolates on offer.

I go to Strathfield on one or two days a week and meet with three to five students each week on a one-to-one basis for one to two hours. The students that I mentor are mature age students who have completed preliminary courses at Clemente at either Mission Australia, Surry Hills or the Community centre Campbelltown and have qualified for tertiary studies at the university. All of them are multi-disadvantaged, four of them suffer mental health problems, one of them was homeless until he moved into the Salvation Army centre, one girl is from Sierra Leone and has language and cultural issues. All struggle financially.

My role is to provide help and encouragement to the students. This might mean helping them interpret a question, discussing their assignments, reading assignments, pointing out that they haven't answered the question, spelling needs to be checked or a reminder to add references or acknowledge work quoted. Sometimes it is just providing a listening ear over a coffee. A student will often email or phone me at home when a problem arises with their assignments.

The Institute of Community Engagement at Strathfield, under the leadership of Professor Jude Butcher and Associate Professor Peter Howard provides a welcoming and friendly environment in which to volunteer and I am always included in their activities and celebrations. The Clemente students feel very comfortable to call and ask for assistance and I suspect to see if there is some cake or chocolates on offer.

The time I give to the Clemente students I find very rewarding. I get far more from them than I give to them.



A new venture in Education

by Sr Margaret Valentine rsc

2017 will see the commencement of a new school, in the Wollongong Diocese, at Edmondson Park, NSW – **St Francis Catholic College**, a Diocesan Catholic College in the Edmund Rice Tradition.

Sr Margaret's ministry will be a pastoral one as a Family/School Liaison Person. Within this role Sr Margaret will visit families connected with the school and support students attending the College, particularly those who are experiencing difficulties in any way. She will also support and work with staff members.

The College is located in the Mary Mother of the Church Parish, Macquarie Fields.

St Francis Catholic College will be a Preschool to Year 12 College with an eventual enrolment of more than 1600 students. Catholic Care will provide a before and after school care service plus the running of the Preschool.

The College will commence in 2017 with a Preschool, three Kindergarten Classes, one each of Year 1 to Year 6 and three Year 7 Classes – with an enrolment of approximately 250 students.

Unfortunately a number of issues outside the College's control have led to delays in obtaining final Council approvals for the buildings and the delivery of essential road networks and services for the initial stage of the school on the proposed site, therefore a temporary school will be established for the commencement of the 2017 school year at Oran Park adjacent to the existing St Benedict's/St Justin's School site. The temporary site will be largely self-contained and include all of the facilities planned for the initial stage at Edmondson Park – General Learning Areas, specialist facilities for Technical and Applied Studies, Staff Study and a Hall. It will also provide a grassed playing area and covered playground.



The Vision of the College is based on the Edmund Rice Tradition touchstones:

Liberating Education: We open hearts and minds, through quality teaching and learning experiences, so that through critical reflection and engagement each person is hope-filled and free to build a better world for all.

Gospel Spirituality: We invite all people into the story of Jesus and strive to make his message of compassion, justice and peace a living reality within our community.

Inclusive Community: Our community is accepting and welcoming, fostering right relationships and committed to the common good.

Justice & Solidarity: We are committed to justice and peace for all, grounded in a spirituality of action and reflection that calls us to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised and the Earth itself.

In the words of Bishop Peter Ingham,

“we pray that the future students of this new Catholic school will be similarly motivated and encouraged to live lives of joyful hope and generosity, just as St Francis did.”

*May God bless this new venture
and all who are part of it.*

Seasons Greetings!

*‘May an abundance
of gratitude be with
you for what you have
given and received
during the year.*

*May thanksgiving
overflow in your
heart and gratitude
be the gift that finds
its source in the
knowledge that you
truly have made
a difference.*

*May the hope of the
Advent/Christmas
season settle within
you and enliven
your spirit.’*



Meditations for teachers

in Catholic Schools

by Sr Karen Varker rsc

As a teacher it has been a great privilege for me to discover and to present as modern, inclusive language translations, sixteen extraordinary meditations written by St John Baptist De La Salle (1651-1719) who is the patron saint of teachers. St De La Salle was a pioneer of spirituality in the classroom and he established many of the common practices we still follow and value today. His spirituality is unique in that it is a pedagogical spirituality and as such is timeless.

These meditations, which St De La Salle called *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, are an extremely rich resource for all Christian teachers because they touch on themes that we practice every day in our classrooms and in our homes. Some of these include how to live our Christianity as teachers, how to correct our young people with dignity, and how to lead them to make choices which enrich their lives.

Br Peter Heaney fsc, who has been offering the Meditations to teachers for many years, invited me to write the modern translation which has now been incorporated into a website through which those interested may enrol in the program offered. During the period of enrolment, they receive spiritual guidance and certification. Since they are Meditations, as such they need to be reflected on and prayed.



For the last 20 minutes each individual writes personal reflections which are then sent to the spiritual guide given to each on enrolment in the program. St Pauls wrote to the Ephesians:

“You must be renewed by a spiritual revolution, so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God’s way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.”

Eph 4:23-24

Although individuals may pray them, it is suggested that they will be very effective when a number of School Staff Members do them together over some weeks, for about an hour each week. In this case, each individual in the group spends about 20 minutes alone praying the particular Meditation. The group then comes together for about 20 minutes to share their reflections on it.

This set of Meditations by St De La Salle is a precious gem which, when prayed, may, through the power of the Spirit of God, indeed create within individuals and groups such a “spiritual revolution”.

Our website may be visited at www.cmey.org.au/mtr



My Ministry

in Tasmania

by Sr Anne Turner rsc

When I began my ministry at MacKillop College in 1994, my tasks were many and varied. Although I'd been employed as a Library Assistant, I was asked to do all kinds of jobs, including running the canteen for two days a week, managing the school banking, working in the office from 5pm until about 6.30pm each afternoon, as well as replacing office staff members who were absent (or simply out to lunch!), printing, collating and bundling into class groups the weekly newsletter, agonising over scores at college athletics and swimming carnivals and supervising students doing exams.

In between times, I attended various extra-curricular school activities, sometimes feeding and spending evenings with students whose parents were too busy to attend events such as drama productions or student art shows. In addition to all of this, I actually managed to do a bit of work in the library!

My life is very different these days. I work as a volunteer two days a week at MacKillop College, where I spend my time processing, cataloguing and covering new books, which, thankfully, are still eagerly awaited by many of our students. Occasionally I work an extra day if a colleague is absent or the workload is greater than usual. I have also been involved in collecting and storing college memorabilia and archival materials, a task I really enjoy as I am constantly reminded of the valuable contributions our present and former pupils are making to society in all walks of life. I have limited interaction with our students these days, but I am always very aware of them.

As I grow older, their noisy exuberance exhausts me, while their open-hearted generosity and tirelessness when working for those in need inspire me and remind me not to grow too old, at least in spirit. They are, on the whole, a credit to themselves, their parents and the inspiring and dedicated group of people who make up the staff at MacKillop College.



I believe that we can witness to God's love wherever we are, in large and small ways, in ways that are seen and unseen.

Outside of school life, another resident and I have set up a library at Grange Villas, our retirement village, so I'm often found there in my free time. We have based it on an honour system, so our main task is to obtain as many good, second-hand books and DVDs as possible, and to keep the collection on the move. It is a pleasant place to sit and chat and many friendships have developed in our little library. It is a wonderful asset to our aging community, especially given Tasmania's cold and changeable weather.

I do nothing great or world-changing, but I hope that by responding to the opportunities that come my way, whether I am chatting to neighbours who walk their animals along the pathway that runs through my garden, listening in an open, caring way to people who come to talk to me, or comforting a grieving wife and giving practical help to pack up and remove the belongings of her recently deceased and greatly missed husband, I am keeping the charism of Mary Aikenhead alive in my own small way.

Mass for Participants Familiarity Visit

14 October 2016

(St Joseph's Church, Hobart)

In recent times, I participated in a number of special celebrations related to the history of the Sisters of Charity. In 2014, as you would be aware, the Sisters celebrated the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the pioneer Sisters in Australia. Back in 2007, there was another celebration, that of the 160th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters here in Hobart. It was also on that occasion that a history of the Sisters in Tasmania, *"Urged on by the love of Christ"*, written by Sr Josephine Cannell, was launched. Sr Josephine, just in case you are not aware, is very much still alive, living in Melbourne and now in her 99th year.

In my years, prior to being appointed a Bishop, I had served for 15 years as the Parish Priest of Sandy Bay and Taroona, and I came to know the Sisters very well during those years, through their ministries of education and care of children within the parish. I also enjoyed the hospitality of the community at the convent on numerous occasions. I am very pleased to be involved today as some of you learn more of the significant contribution of the Sisters of Charity here in Tasmania, in education, health, and childcare as well as their ministry to the prisoners.

Built as it was in 1841, this Church of St Joseph, was the first Catholic Church in the city of Hobart. On 3 May 1844, the newly appointed first Bishop of Hobart, Robert Willson, came up from the port after arriving in Hobart the night before. The church was full, but in the most part, those present were convicts, who comprised the great majority of his flock when he first arrived.

Only three years later, the three pioneer Sisters of Charity, Mother John Cahill, Sr de Sales O'Brien and Sr Xavier Williams, arrived here in Hobart in June to begin the apostolate of the congregation which has continued without any breaks for 168 years.



The Pilgrims at Mt Carmel College, Sandy Bay

The very first contribution of the Sisters was to provide support and assistance to the female convicts, to be followed by initiatives in education, health care, orphanages, and counselling. They lived on this very site in those early days.

It was here in 1864 that the people of Hobart farewelled Mother John Cahill, the first of the pioneers to go to her eternal reward and the first of many Sisters of Charity whose Requiem Masses were celebrated here at St Joseph's. In this Church many young Tasmanian women took their vows as Sisters of Charity, starting with Mary Robertson, who joined the small community as Sr Teresa in March 1849.

And it was from the residence at the rear of this Church that the Sisters of Charity went out into the streets of Hobart to minister to the people of Hobart, especially the poor, the sick, the disadvantaged and the uneducated.

In the first of the readings for this particular day in the calendar of the church, we hear those very striking words from the opening paragraphs of the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

"In Christ we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ."



Archbishop Doyle
blessing the Pilgrims

We can only surmise about the feelings of the pioneer Sisters, but it would have been a great consolation and motivation for them, were they to have believed very strongly in the words of St Paul. Despite all the difficulties of a long voyage to a far off land, the problems of setting into their original home, in Sydney, and then the decision to come further south to Van Diemen's Land, they had the conviction that it was for this that they were chosen, as part of the purpose of God and the plans that were generated in the mind of God, to spread the Word to these far distant lands as well.

It is important for us all to remember that the One who has chosen us lives in us, guides us and accomplishes the Divine plan through us, and that is still happening with all of us today.

The Gospel passage would have been of assistance to the pioneer Sisters to help them face the many fears that were in front of them. The Gospel words help us as well, to overcome the fears which can creep into our lives, of being unloved, inadequate or lacking in the qualities that we feel we need to take our part in the divine plan. The pioneer sisters knew immediately what they were called to do, and within days of their arrival, they were visiting the prison just down the road, and the Female Factory further up this same Macquarie Street, from the door of this church.

When Pope Francis visited a prison in Philadelphia last year, he said:

"All of us have something we need to be cleansed of or purified from. All of us."

He admonishes us not to slam the door or throw away the key since:

"Jesus came to save us from the lie that says that no one can change."

The pioneer Sisters would have believed those words.

I assume that it is your task, through the various Mary Aikenhead Ministries, to read the signs of the times, and to decide in what direction the spirit and charism of the Sisters of Charity should be directed into the future. It is no easy task that you have, but it is through prayer and discernment and reflection, as well as the consideration of the climate of the times, that you will be able to reach decisions about the road ahead.

I believe that we can very safely say that the three pioneer Sisters, and those who have followed them, have indeed been gripped by the same reality of the meaning of the kingdom. The very motto of the Congregation "*Caritas Christi urget nos*" assures us of that.

Today is a precious opportunity for us to recognise the courage and commitment of the pioneer Sisters, and the many other members of the Congregation who have served in this Archdiocese over the past 169 years as well as in other places in Australia during 177 years.

Although the number may be smaller than in the past, the charism of the Sisters of Charity is well and truly imbedded in the apostolates of Education, Health Care, Welfare and Counselling in the Church in Australia. I have no doubt that the influence of these remarkable women will be with us for many years to come.

'How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news.'

Romans:10-15

Continuing to serve...

by Elsa Skinner on behalf of Sr St Jude Doyle rsc, OAM

Since moving into the Stella Maris home in Cronulla, Sr St Jude Doyle rsc, OAM continues with her mission to serve the poor. Not being one to sit idle she inspires us to think of others and ask 'what can we do to help'.

As well as assisting in the Gift Shop at the home on Thursdays, one of her enjoyable tasks is to regularly meet with two fellow residents, Sr Betty Dawson and her sister Miss Nancy Dawson, to check the stamps from the many that are mailed to her. I'm one such regular contributor, privileged to be a friend of Sr Jude's for over 14 years. I work for TAL Insurance and have a band of helpers who collect the envelopes daily from the mailroom and cut the stamps from the envelopes. Recently out of interest, Sr Jude counted one of the parcels of stamps that I send each month and to her delight there were over 2000 stamps in the one delivery.

These stamps are divided between two worthy organisations.

The first is the Sisters of St Joseph who collect stamps from all over Australia for Mary MacKillop International who then sell the bulk stamps at auction. Recent funds raised from these stamps were \$32,000 in 2014, \$36,000 in 2015 and to date in 2016 \$62,000. These efforts ensure the legacy of St Mary MacKillop continues in Peru, namely the Fe Y Alergria school in Tarma Peru.

The second recipient is Fr Adrian Meaney MSC, who also receives many envelopes containing stamps from around Australia. His relief work provides basic support to people in emergency situations.

Relief is provided in response to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, or other situations such as famine or conflict. In these emergency situations, direct assistance such as the distribution of clothing, food, seeds, tools or temporary housing, may be provided. Relief measures provide life-sustaining assistance aimed at the communities directly affected by the disaster.

Above right: Sr Jude Doyle rsc

Bottom right: Fe Y Alergria School 'Tuck Shop' at Tarma, Peru



"I expect to pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now...for I shall not pass this way again."

Etienne de Grellet



Words of remembrance

Sr Margaret Galvin rsc

(12 November 1927 - 12 July 2016)

Good morning! On behalf of all Sisters of Charity I welcome you here today to join with us and Margaret's family to say our very sad goodbye to this wonderful lady, Margaret Mary Galvin. She was called home to God more quickly than we thought and this can be quite difficult if we did not have the opportunity to say goodbye. The Vigil yesterday afternoon is always a very important part of our Rituals of farewell, especially in sharing our memories of Margaret as we did.

Margaret came to the Sisters of Charity on February 2nd 1954 aged 25, along with eight companions. Two had died and the seven remaining recently celebrated their Diamond Jubilee of Religious Profession. It was wonderful to share their joy as they each celebrated the way they wished.

Margaret was educated by the Sisters of Charity, primary through to secondary. Secondary education was at St Columba's College Essendon and was completed in 1946. She herself became a teacher. A year after finishing school Margaret joined the Victorian Education Department and after several years attending Melbourne State Teacher's College and Melbourne University she graduated as a Teacher equipped to teach Prep to Year 8 boys and girls.

Following two and a half years in the Novitiate, Margaret went to Potts Point and was missioned to her first ministry at St Canice's School Elizabeth Bay where she remained for eleven years.

Margaret enjoyed these years and after eleven years she returned to her home State of Victoria, where she continued her ministry as Principal in Primary Education.

For many years Margaret ministered in schools and parishes. She had the friendship and support of so many fine parents that she was able to form groups in Spirituality and Family Development.

Whilst engaging in this ministry a man by the name of Dom John Main and Dom Lawrence Freeman from Great Britain visited Australia and gave talks about small Christian Meditation Groups they initiated in many countries. Margaret was called to begin some of these groups which she did and she accompanied them along the way until they were established.



She considered it a blessing to see these groups continuing. From being involved with Christian Meditation Groups Margaret felt moved to become involved in Ecumenical activities in the Diocese of Melbourne and eventually became a delegate to the Victorian Council of Churches. Margaret had the joy of being part of these networks which enabled so many lay people searching for a deeper relationship with their Lord to be involved.

Margaret was more than what she did. And I share with you now the Margaret we knew and loved. Only three months ago Margaret had her Diamond Jubilee and I shall never forget how much she enjoyed her celebrations. The highlight for her was in personally contacting each of her companions celebrating with her and sharing in their joy. Little did Margaret realise that those calls were to be her last with them.

Around this time Margaret contacted me to say she had come to the decision to go into care at St Catherine's Balwyn where there is already a small community of our Sisters. This is what made her happy – to be with her Sisters. Our Sisters Mary Gabrielle, Anna and Amanda welcomed Margaret into their Community at Deepdene while she waited for a bed to be available at St Catherine's. She was so grateful for the care at St Catherine's and she was content knowing her family were happy with her decision.

Margaret was a real lady. She always greeted you warmly, was delighted to see you and interested in what you were doing. Above all she loved being a Sister of Charity. She was a true daughter of Mary Aikenhead. Prior to going to St Catherine's Margaret was in an ILU at Mercy Place at Parkville. She endeared herself to many residents there and started prayer groups. Her family meant everything to her. If Fran was happy she was happy. Margaret would have loved the way our Sisters gathered around her following her death. They prayed, they shared what Margaret meant to them, they spoke her Vows for her, they simply were present to her.

Dear Margaret, you were a strong but gentle woman. Warm, hospitable, charitable, non-judgemental and a good listener. We will miss you so much.

On your Profession Day you chose the motto "*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord.*" And that you have been Margaret. Woman of faith and love following God's lead in your life for others, saying "Yes" as Mary did all the days of your life to this your final Yes!

Go now in peace faithful friend of God, and take our love into Paradise.

Clare Nolan rsc

Congregational Leader

we remember...

Sr Maree Henderson rsc

(4 November 1931 - 1 December 2016)



Good morning! On behalf of all Sisters of Charity I welcome you to this Mass of Christian Burial for our much loved Sister, Maree Henderson. It is a sad day for all of us to have to say goodbye to such a great woman, such a vibrant Sister of Charity and such a loved and valued member of the Henderson and Binns family. It is wonderful to see you all here Maree's cousins Martha and Tony, Marion, Michael and Bryony, Helen and Peter. Thank you Fr Paul Foley for being our celebrant.

Much could be said this morning about the Maree we knew and her contribution to society through her creative and eager mind. It was our recent joy to share with Maree her Diamond Jubilee of Profession. Her own group who entered with her in 1954 all made contact for this great occasion. Maree was a visionary in becoming a Medical Herbalist and through that reached out to so many people bringing them healing, comfort and a heightened sense of wellbeing.

One of our Sisters who recently visited a NSW country area brought back the well wishes of some Sisters of St Joseph to Maree remembering her wonderful ministry to the rural community which

still continues today through Maree's passing on her knowledge and helping them to continue without her.

She was a woman who instilled hope into people for the generations to come. One of her last actions was disregarding her pain to get in the wheelchair and be taken out to see the garden rather than imagine it.

Her last request was *"please pray with me."*

Clare Nolan rsc
Congregational Leader

Reflection on the Readings – Requiem for Sr Maree Henderson rsc

On Friday morning when I asked Father Peter to celebrate Mass for Maree, I told him a little of her background, her keen intelligence and how she knew so much about science. He replied: "Well, now she knows a lot more!" But what that 'more' is precisely is known only to God and is part of the incredible mystery that confronts all of us in the face of death especially someone we have loved for many years.

Somehow the word "mystery" fits Maree's life in so many ways. One was her unflagging joy when delving into the mysteries of the scientific and natural worlds that underlay her huge reputation as a science teacher. In the latter part of her life she began with her great friend Jude the Remote and Rural ministry. Over countless hours on the phone she offered her wisdom and practical help to school and community leaders in outback NSW.

Maree was what used to be called "a late vocation". An experienced pharmacist before she entered at the age of 23, she was astonished at some of the funny customs that we younger ones tended to take in our stride. But she had a sense that this was what God was asking of her so she avoided undue comments and made the best of it.

I've known Maree since I was 16 and in my final year at Bethlehem College. At some point I confided my intention to enter the Sisters of Charity and thus I became her "postulant". For over fifty years, she referred to me as "the postulant".

As an only child, Maree valued her cousins and some time ago she asked to move to Cronulla so as to be closer to them. I'm only one of the many who appreciated the constancy of Maree's friendship. When you became her friend, you were a friend for life.

Yet in all that time, it was only this past week that I learned the motto she took on her profession day: "You are with me, Lord Jesus."

Since then, I've been reflecting on this and the light it has shone on what was always something of a mystery to me and perhaps to others: her distinctly private inner spiritual life.

In the Gospel reading we've just heard, friendship with Jesus, as he himself tells us, is to overflow into friendship and love for one another, in that order. The core of Maree's religious commitment was this awareness and it was this relationship that expanded to include all of us who were privileged to call her our friend.

Perhaps the closest we ever come to understanding another person's inner life is through what they hold as precious. In this way, Maree's spiritual life seemed to be at one with her wonder at the extraordinary works of God's creation. For her, the felicitous words of the poet Gerald Manley Hopkins ring so true:

*The world is charged with the
grandeur of God...*

*There lives the dearest freshness
deep-down things...*

Margaret Beirne rsc



Keep in touch is a quarterly newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families, friends and supporters.

Published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

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