



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF AUSTRALIA

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Mary Aikenhead declared venerable

Pope Francis honours founder of the Religious Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Charity of Australia (Rome 18 March 2015)

Mary Aikenhead (1787-1858), who founded the Religious Sisters of Charity in 1815 to provide services to “the suffering poor”, has been declared Venerable by Pope Francis. Being declared Venerable is the second of four steps in the Catholic Church’s Canonisation process.

Throughout the world today Religious Sisters of Charity are in Ireland, England, Scotland, Zambia, California, Nigeria, Malawi and Australia. Religious Sisters of Charity continue to work courageously and creatively with people who are poor in the areas of healthcare, education, pastoral and social work. They actively engage in advocacy, action and prayer for people in need, linking and networking with others in the quest for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

When Mary Aikenhead set up her Congregation two hundred years ago, there were only a hundred women religious in Ireland, all enclosed contemplatives. Mary applied to Rome for permission for her Sisters to take a fourth vow of ‘Service of the Poor’, enabling them to visit poor people in their own homes; those who were sick and hungry and cold and penniless and with no one to turn to. With the support of Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin, she received her training in Religious Life at the Bar Convent, York where, under



the guidance of the Loreto Sisters, she was formed in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. Mary and her sisters became the first women religious to visit prisoners in Kilmainham Gaol. In 1830, she opened her first Catholic school for poor children in Gardiner Street, Dublin. Against all odds she founded St Vincent’s Hospital in 1834, the first Hospital in Ireland to be run by women to care for patients of all creeds and where doctors and nurses could receive training. In 1838 Mary Aikenhead sent five Sisters to Australia, the first women religious to set foot in this country.

Sister Clare Nolan, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of Australia, concurs with Sister Mary Christian, Congregational Leader of the Religious Sisters of Charity in Ireland that Mary Aikenhead was a woman ahead of her time.

“All around her Mary Aikenhead saw the plight of people who were poor and suffering. Her great faith and trust in Divine Providence enabled her and the first Religious Sisters of Charity to provide education for poor children, establish medical facilities for those in need of health care and to visit the sick and poor in their homes. In one of her letters we read that the sole purpose of the Congregation is: ‘to lend our humble assistance to alleviate the sufferings of the poor of every creed.’”

Mary Aikenhead’s life was not easy, but she never lost hope. Her life teaches and inspires us to dream courageous visions, to have compassion for human pain, to analyse unjust structures which are the cause of poverty, to work with others to solve problems and to remain resolute in the face of hardship.”

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A 20 year celebration of Archivists of Religious Institutes

by Janet Howse, Archives Manager



ARI archivists at the service

The Sisters of Charity Congregational Archives is the repository of the history and heritage of the Sisters, the facilities they started and managed, the ministries undertaken and the physical sites where they were located. The Archives does not exist in isolation, nor do the records or the artefacts held in the Archives. The Archives clearly form a significant part of Australian history, from different perspectives – history of education and health, the role of women in society and church history. The Sisters of Charity were far sighted when the original Information and Library Centre was established in 1975. Sr Genevieve Campbell, was the first Congregational Archivist appointed in 1974, holding this responsibility for 30 years. In 1995, the first lay person and professionally qualified archivist, Mrs Guilaine Buckley, was appointed, followed by Mrs Patricia Jacobsen (2004-2009) and Mrs Denise Corrigan (Archives Officer, 2003-2009, Archives Manager, 2010-2013) and Ms Elizabeth Sheridan (Assistant Archivist from 2010).

Many other Religious Institutes have established Archives, however, few with lay archivists as early as the Sisters of Charity. The Sisters of Charity Archivists, Sr Genevieve Campbell and Mrs Guilaine Buckley, were active in the early formation of what is now known as the Archivists of Religious Institutes (ARI) in 1995. In 1993, an advisory committee had been formed at the Diocesan level to advise on Archives of Religious Institutes. Sr Genevieve Campbell represented the

Sisters of Charity. The concept of Archives as Ministry was generally endorsed amongst Religious Institutes.

One of the earliest formal meetings of ARI was held on 3 May 1996 at the Congregational Archives at Potts Point. The objectives set down in 1995 included to provide a forum to discuss archival needs and ways of supporting other archivists responsible for the archives of Religious Institutes. In 1996 38 attended and by 1997 this had grown to 47, with more giving apologies. In 1998, a standing committee of ARI included Guilaine Buckley as well as Patricia Jacobsen (who served for a total of 11 years).

At the 20th anniversary gathering of ARI held at the Good Samaritan Function Centre, Glebe NSW held on 20 March 2015, 25 congregations, one diocese and one school were represented. There were stories about an archives starting with a box of documents stored under a bed! Reference was made to Archives of Religious Institutes being the repositories of the long and sacred memories of people and their role in sharing people's identity and character. The archives of Religious Institutes are not held exclusively for their members, but should be available, when appropriate, to outside researchers, including relatives. Archives are invaluable in finding meaning for the present including helping



Five of the original ARI members: Sr Marie Kennedy, Sacred Heart (first left); Sr Genevieve Davey, Loreto, Kirribilli (last right)

individuals find out and establish their identity. Reference was made to the 1997 Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church and its emphasis on the role of archives, both within the church and within the wider community.

In the afternoon, a ritual was held in the St Scholastica's Chapel, which included a reflection and commitment to the Universal Declaration of Archives, which was adopted at the General Assembly of the International Council on Archives in 2010. Representatives of all Religious Institutes were invited to bring a symbol of their Congregation to the ritual and to identify the significance of the symbol to both the religious institute and to its archives.



Janet Howse, Archives Manager, Sisters of Charity, with the 'Tarmons' key

It was an honour for Liz and I to represent the Sisters of Charity of Australia on this occasion. We selected the original key to 'Tarmons' as the Sisters of Charity symbol for the following reasons. The key is a tangible representation of the founding years of the Congregation in Australia and to the original physical site or footprint of both the Congregation and the Archives. We believe that a key is symbolic of unlocking doors, getting rid of secrecy, new openings and unlocking knowledge and information. A key is something that affords a means of 'access', which is most relevant as a principal component of Archives theory and practice is access – both intellectual and physical access and the concepts of security and custody. We also perceived that a key to something is a means to clarify or unlock a problem. Used as an adjective, key means something important, essential or fundamental. Key is a most pertinent and relevant concept to link to Archives, which is fundamental to unlocking the history and heritage of the Congregation and providing a link between the past, present and future.

Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life

by Sr Jean Marie rsc

Every year many of our Sisters attend the special Mass for consecrated religious and priests held in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

This year, on Saturday 11th April, there was a big response from many Sisters, Brothers and Priests to Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP invitation to attend this celebration because of Pope Francis's letter that 2015 would be celebrated as the 'Year of Consecrated Life.' In his letter the Pope challenged us to respond particularly to the new demands being made on us to hear the cry of the poor.

Many Sisters of Charity from Sydney and further afield were present, participating in the Congregation choir or the procession – Sister Margaret Beirne carrying the candle, representing the foundation of our Congregation in Dublin 200 years ago and also Mary Aikenhead being declared Venerable.



Sr Jean Marie Brennan (left) and Sr Karen Nguyen

After Mass we gathered in the Christian Brother's High School hall for a delicious lunch and the opportunity to catch up with friends from various parishes.

"I'm counting on you to wake up the world, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. Religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way."

Pope Francis



Sr Margaret Beirne carrying the candle in the procession at the Mass

Teaching teachers

in South Sudan

by Sr Annette Cunliffe

A project called *Solidarity with South Sudan* is sponsored by the Leaders of men's and women's Religious congregations. Members of many different Congregations and also lay volunteers work and form community together, training teachers, nurses, midwives, local farmers and community leaders in this youngest country in the world.

As well as pre-service teacher training, a special project of in-service training allows those who have been teaching but have not had the opportunity to gain qualifications to obtain a Teaching Certificate equivalent to two years' training. This was the program that I had the privilege of being involved with in early 2015. The teachers give up two months of their holidays each year for four years.

It is particularly challenging for the women who have infants still being breast fed. They bring older siblings – sometimes as young as eight – to care for the babies. Several of the little ones had malaria which, is highly prevalent, and been worryingly ill. That meant little sleep for the mothers, together with anxiety and, in at least one case, twice-daily visits to the local clinic, so that the baby's condition could be monitored. At the same time they were trying to keep up with study. The cost of medicine, compared with their income is very high so sugared water might be all they can use. Little wonder then, that, of 17 teachers in the final year, only two were women – despite an effort to sponsor women.

Resources in this country are very limited. This included the lack of teaching resources other than chalk and blackboard. However those of us who were involved in this program sponsored by Rumbek Diocese, were extremely well looked after. I realised how much we really don't need and what is actually important in our lives. The teachers themselves were a genuine inspiration, with their commitment and earnestness, their deep faith and love of God and Jesus. They continually live in need of God's loving providence and really live with this faith. The country has known over thirty years of war, so many know little else.



Graduating mother and family

One lasting impression will be of the friendliness of the people. All wave or shake hands with a smile. It isn't everywhere that a minority white person is so well accepted. There seemed to be little or no resentment of us as people whose lives are more privileged than theirs. The teachers managed to teach us to say "chibac" as a greeting. They then went on to teach us something that sounded like "inapallwoup?" with a significantly rising tone of interrogation to then ask "How are you?"



Graduation group, Sr Annette (front row right)

We came to know the teachers in the program rather well. It was enormously humbling to see the difficulties that they struggled to overcome – not least the fact that English is often their third language. They all converse much more naturally in Dinka and many were educated in Arabic, when the country was part of Sudan.



Teaching teachers in South Sudan

Much of their struggle and ours was to ensure comprehension of the language and even concepts and examples that the curriculum materials and we teachers used. In turn we struggled at times with their accent, though others in the classes were always helpful in interpreting.

A great joy was the fact that all 17 of those in the final year passed all subjects and graduated in a wonderfully joyous ceremony. Academic gowns were hired and an outdoor lunch pavilion beautifully decorated for the occasion. The students in the third year of the program also attended and were recognised for their achievements.

Ceremonies

marking the 200th Anniversary of Mary Aikenhead founding the Religious Sisters of Charity

In ceremonies planned for Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries gathered with groups of Sisters of Charity for refreshments and the presentation of a small gift to each Sister to mark the 200 years since the founding of the Religious Sisters of Charity.

The Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries rejoice with the Congregation on the 200th anniversary of Mary Aikenhead founding the Religious Sisters of Charity. We recognise her visionary contribution in establishing a congregation whose Sisters were enabled, through a fourth vow of 'Service of the Poor', to visit the poor and sick in their own homes, and to go to the margins to minister to the disadvantaged and vulnerable. Comparably, the Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia have been pioneers of education, health and social services ministries in Australia and beyond, as well as in envisioning Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Just as Mary Aikenhead was a woman ahead of her time, so too have been her Australian daughters. You came as the first women religious to Australia and in countless ministries laid key foundation stones of Catholic education, health and outreach in New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland.

The Trustees realise that the greatest gift to the Sisters of Charity in this anniversary year is Pope Francis' declaration of your foundress, Mary Aikenhead, as Venerable. In seeking this occasion to celebrate with you the 200 years of the Religious Sisters of Charity, we also want to celebrate with you Pope Francis' announcement and to



Gathering of Sisters at Clayton, VIC for special 200 year gift presentation by Trustees of Mary Aikenhead

congratulate you warmly on both these joyous occurrences. In presenting you with a far less significant gift than Pope Francis we want to express our admiration for all you have contributed to the Australian Church and society, our affection for you, and our gratitude for the trust that you have placed in us with the stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

Your Congregational charism is *"to bring to each person the love, the tenderness and concern of Christ for the poor, seeing Christ in everyone we serve"* (Constitutions: Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia). In offering you a small gift to celebrate 200 years of the Religious Sisters of Charity,



200 year foundation gift

we thank you for being Christ to generations of Australians and especially to us. For two centuries the charism of Mary Aikenhead has been the inspiration of the Sisters of Charity and their co-workers – we have also had the privilege of your inspiration as, in Australia, you have followed so faithfully in Mary Aikenhead's footsteps.

Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Gathering of Sisters with Trustees at St Vincent's Clinic, Sydney

Year of Consecrated Life

St Therese's Parish Essendon (31 May 2015)

by Sr Judith Christy rsc

Sisters of Charity, Regina Millard and Judith Christy, talked at the Masses at St Theresa's Essendon, 31st May. The weekend was dedicated to the Year of Consecrated Life. The Parish Priest, Fr Bill Attard wrote in the Parish Bulletin the following weekend:- *The Year of Consecrated Life: We are grateful to the Sisters of Mercy and Charity for their work last weekend. Especially Sisters Eileen Ann, Regina and Judy who reflected at all our Masses. We are grateful to the team of Religious Sisters who set up the room and to Sr Margaret Dwyer, rsc who prepared the wonderful display for the Sisters of Charity story but was unable to attend.*

Three dimensions of Religious Life

Religious Life brings, first of all, prophetic witness: It is an indication of how the spirit can move individuals drawing them to closer discipleship in different ways. Secondly, religious life indicates a witness of radical discipleship. Thirdly, there is a contemplative dimension in religious life as an indication of an integral feature of discipleship of Jesus.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today, as our school children did so beautifully at their Sorry Mass on Friday.

Pope Francis has dedicated this year to those called to live a consecrated Religious Life. There are thousands throughout the world of which Pope Francis is one, and I another.

Three Religious who have gone before me and influenced me are St Therese who is our Parish Patron Saint who lived a contemplative life (I am sure there are many young girls who have Therese as their Confirmation name. I have!).

Mary MacKillop, foundress of the Sisters of St Joseph, our first Australian Saint. Mary grew up in Fitzroy close to where I lived in Clifton Hill, and Mother Teresa, whom I sat next to once at a Conference. She lived for years in one Order and then in time founded another, the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

When God called me to follow Him I chose the Sisters of Charity because they taught me at school. Mary Aikenhead was born in Ireland in 1787 and was received into the Catholic Church when she was 15.

In 1815 she founded our Congregation, in response to the call of Archbishop Murray, who wanted an Order in Australia that would be apostolic and be of service to those in need, especially the poor and marginalised. She chose the spirituality of St Ignatius and Sisters of Charity take a 4th Vow of Service of the Poor. Her spirit has spread to many parts of the world – Nigeria, Malawi, Ireland, England, Scotland, USA and in 1838 she sent five Sisters to Australia. They arrived in Sydney to care for the Irish convict women and their children in Parramatta and then three of these Sisters went to Hobart to do the same there.

This year, on the 15th of August, the Assumption of Our Lady, our Congregation will be 200 years old and during that time we commemorate 700 Australian Sisters of Charity who have died and 1500 Sisters of Charity throughout the other countries.

Our motto is *Caritas Christi Urget Nos – The love of Christ Urges us on.* When I entered in 1958 we wore the traditional black Religious habit, lived in convents and took a Saint's name. Now the normal is wearing the Sisters of Charity crucifix and gold ring, live in houses or Units and revert back to our Baptismal name. For 40 years I was Carmel after Our Lady of Mt Carmel who is seen in holy pictures gently holding the child Jesus. Now I am Judith who has a Book of the Old Testament in her name, telling how she saved her people by cutting off Holaphernas head!

But the one thing that hasn't changed is God's unconditional love, not just for consecrated religious but for everyone. We are all God's children.



Sr Regina, Fr Bill Attard, Parish Priest and Sr Judith

**Talk by Sr Regina Millard Sister of Charity
for St Therese's Parish for the Year of
Consecrated Life 31 May 2015**

*"The Church must be attractive.
Wake up the world! Be witnesses
of a different way of acting, living!*

*It is possible to live differently in this
world...it is THIS witness I expect
of you."*

(Pope Francis to Religious)

I stand before you feeling privileged
to be a Sister of Charity – the first
Religious women in Australia.

*We Sisters of Charity are women
of Mary Aikenhead, contemplatives
in action.*

*Impelled by the love of Christ.
We live the joy of the Gospel.*

*We respond courageously to the call
to mission, going out to the margins,
walking in partnerships with others.*

(Chapter Statement 2014)

Our story begins in 1838 when five Irish Sisters of Charity responded to the call of Archbishop Murray to found a Congregation that would be of service to the suffering poor in the early colony of Australia. The sisters came bearing a black crucifix, a gift from Mary Aikenhead to the 'five' knowing they would encounter the aboriginal people and wanting her sisters to include them in her care. They went first to the women prisoners and children at the Female Factory Parramatta NSW. What a shock it must have been! In 1847 three of the first five Sisters went to Hobart to the prisons there. Three months after arriving in Australia one of the five, a Novice, Professed her Vows in St Patrick's Cathedral Parramatta in 1839. The first Religious Profession on Australian soil. These five Sisters responded courageously to the call of the Gospel: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt:28) and "Whenever you do this you do it to me." (Mt:46) This call was an opportunity to deepen their own baptismal call to be disciples of Jesus.

The call to mission began for me on 2 February 1965. The Second Vatican Council had just ended. Our Entrance group of ten young women stood at a doorway into great hope but also great change in the Church and in Religious Life. For some it was very daunting and for others it could not come quickly enough. The TV series Brides of Christ addressed this very well.



St Therese's Parish Church, Essendon, Victoria

And The Sound of Music premiered that year. Religious life was in the spotlight. I had begun my Registered Nurse Training at St Vincent's Sydney but after 10 months decided to put nursing aside and ask to enter the Sisters of Charity who ran the Hospital. Why did I do that? Because I was excited about the prospect of having a vocation that allowed me to be a nun and a nurse – the profession I loved so much. The compassion and love I felt for the sick and dying fitted with the Congregation's apostolic work of health care. I re-started my training after my Profession in 1967.

The attached picture of our Sr Maurus feeding men in a laneway in Sydney during the Depression embodies for me the call of the Sisters of Charity in action. Mary Aikenhead taught her sisters "to do for the poor with love, what the rich could buy with money." These words motivate us.

And you, our much loved people of St Therese Parish – where do you fit into this year of consecrated life? You are baptised into it. Every baptized person is called to live in loving obedience to what God is asking; every baptized person is called to make their home in God and free themselves to love; every baptized person is called to live a life of simplicity and poverty. Blessed are the poor in spirit...

Come then, let us join hands as the baptised, consecrated people of God at St Therese, bringing forth the kingdom together. The motto Mary Aikenhead chose for her Congregation is *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* – *The love of Christ Urges us*. Love is our motivating force. Let love be your motivating force also urging you onwards with us in living our baptismal call.

I give you these beautiful words of Pedro Arrupe SJ entitled *Falling in Love*:

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

[Venerable Mary Aikenhead pray for us!](#)



Sr Pauline Staunton rsc OAM retires

Chaplaincy Administrator, Corrective Services NSW

by Sr Clare Nolan rsc, Congregational Leader

Retirement, Thursday, 18th June 2015

Corrective Services Academy,

Brush Farm, Eastwood

During the last 27 years everything Sister Pauline Staunton did through her role in chaplaincy as Administrator NSW Prisons at Long Bay and throughout the state of NSW, benefited and supported as many of those in prison as possible.

Prison Ministry is often interpreted as going 'inside' for various reasons and having direct contact with those in prison. There is far more to ministering in prisons than that. To be effective careful attention to the overall context will enable positive outcomes for those who are incarcerated, their families, those who have been victimised by the crimes committed and indeed for the wider society.



Dr Anne-Marie Martin & Mr Luke Grant, (Assistant Commissioners), Sr Clare Nolan, (Congregational Leader), Sr Pauline Staunton, Monsignor John Boyle, (Chair CCAC), Rev. Rodney Moore, (Chaplaincy Coordinator)

When I was incarcerated you continually provided support for me...



Commissioner of Corrective Services,
Mr Peter Severin and Sr Pauline

When the first five religious sisters came from Ireland to this land on 31st December 1838 their major ministry was to be and became the care of the women incarcerated at the Female Factory in Parramatta. And what a difference those first women religious made. Since that time there have been Sisters of Charity ministering to those who are in prison. We are rightly proud of Pauline's substantial contribution to this.

No one works in isolation and Pauline's involvement was by its nature ecumenical and with the laity for which she was well suited. There are other hidden aspects of being the first point of contact as Pauline answered the phone in the chaplains' Long Bay office where she would often ease the stress of those who phoned through providing correct information and advice where needed. These contributions are not quantifiable but no less essential.

What involvement did Pauline have in Prison Ministry over the years?

In 1956, soon after Pauline was professed as a Religious Sister of Charity of Australia she, in the company of a senior sister, visited those who were in prison at Long Bay Prison. This of course was after hours as her full time ministry at that time was teaching at Sacred Heart Primary School Darlinghurst.

There was a similar pattern when ministering in Hobart from 1959 to 1968 and also visited Risdon Prison, again with a senior sister. As well as an initial teaching role Pauline was the Principal at St Joseph's Primary School Hobart from 1962 to 1964 and then at St Francis Xavier Primary School South Hobart from 1965 to 1967. As if the Principal didn't have enough to do!

While studying at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines 1978-79 prisoners, including a political prisoner, were enriched by her visits at San Juan Prison.

Then in January 1988 Pauline commenced her role in administration at the Long Bay Correctional Complex at Long Bay. Only this time it was a full time ministry. To begin with relatively simple tasks such as answering the phone occupied her time. As she became aware of unmet needs, and could see ways these challenges could become a reality, the role developed and grew exponentially into the substantial ministry and service it is today.

Coordination of and support for chaplains

One of her tasks involved coordinating, formalizing and administering chaplaincy services in NSW prisons. To effect this Pauline was involved in appointing chaplains, including at times being a member of the interview panel; in orientation, follow up and ongoing 'training' of chaplains.

Sisters Of Charity Prison Group

During the 1990's I was privileged to be in a position to form a Sisters of Charity Prison Ministry Group. At that time there were four sisters working full time within the prisons. The five of us met regularly and were in touch with other sisters involved in prison ministry but more in an extra curricular manner.

During this time Pauline was involved in the preparation of the Sisters of Charity Prison Ministry report, which was presented at the 1996 Chapter. An important inclusion was the appendix comprising a large collection of reflections, comments and notes from sisters who had been and were involved. This report was only one of the numerous reports Pauline wrote over the years.

Representation

Another key aspect of Pauline's work was with many Committees, not only through membership but also often in a leadership role. Most of these committees fell within her full time work but there were others related to Catholic Prison Ministry and the Sister of Charity Prison Ministry group particularly in the 1990's.

So respected is Pauline that she was appointed as a representative on the International scene and attended conferences in South Africa, Ireland, Canada, Sweden. In Rome she represented the Australian Catholic Bishops. Pauline is also a member of the International Prison Chaplains Association.

What kind of person could achieve all this?

What kind of person was able to achieve this remarkable outcome? Many of us in different aspects of Pauline's life know her as an affirming person with a well-developed sense of humour, with natural abilities, and with many other skills she learnt or developed as needed. Her ability to take initiative and then to facilitate and follow through is clearly evident.

Finally

Pauline, we are so very proud of you and of what you have achieved here. Your ministry has truly answered the call of Jesus *"I was in prison and you came to see me...whenever you did this you did it to me."* (Mt:25v36) It is my privilege to be here today representing all Sisters of Charity and it is with joy wherever we are, that we share this moment with you and your colleagues.

Pauline, you are a true daughter of Mary Aikenhead, whose first thought in sending her five sisters to Australia in 1838 was to give dignity to the women prisoners of Parramatta, as we mentioned earlier. It is a ministry that has remained dear to our hearts as Sisters of Charity and we have had wonderful Sisters who have responded wholeheartedly to that call – and today we celebrate your part in that line of Sisters of Charity in Prison Ministry. We celebrate you Pauline and we give thanks for you.

Thank you to all Sisters who helped in forming this tribute to you Pauline. Many have been in contact with me offering their thoughts about you on this day.

Thank you for allowing us to celebrate with you and may your generous spirit and sense of humour remain with your colleagues, inmates and families as you walk with trust in God to what awaits you beyond these walls. Pauline, we salute you!

25 Years of Sisters of Charity Outreach, Sydney

by Sr Pauline Nicholson rsc

This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Sisters of Charity Outreach. It is a special year and also the end of an era. It is:

A time to remember, a time to Celebrate, a time to be grateful

Remembering Sister Mary Maguire, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity when St Vincent's Clinic and Outreach were being planned, and her Council giving approval for the Clinic firmly stating: "NO OUTREACH, NO CLINIC."

Remembering Sister St Jude Doyle and her supportive team who took up the challenge of establishing Sisters of Charity Outreach.

From the Archives

In February 1990, three Sisters of Charity: Maree Henderson rsc, Elaine Lum rsc and Eileen Brown rsc, were appointed to the Outreach Centre, which was temporarily housed at the Volunteer and Associates of the Sisters of Charity (VASCA) in Paddington.

The first group of volunteers were recruited during early 1990 and attended an eight week training course during April and May of that year.

The Outreach Centre was opened as part of St Vincent's Clinic in Darlinghurst on 25th September 1990 and an inaugural seminar was held with presentations focussing on the role of the Church.

The Outreach Committee was appointed by the Congregation in early 1991, holding its first meeting on 14 February 1991.

The recruitment and training of Outreach volunteers was and remains an ongoing priority.



Sr Mary Maguire rsc

Snippets from our Annual Reviews

2001-2002: Divine Providence

In the year 2001-2002 Outreach has its own story of trust in Divine Providence. The works of Outreach were flourishing but by June it became evident that even with our efforts to avoid it there was a budget overrun and some of the services provided became threatened. How could we increase our income? Outreach is God's work and God would provide. Trust in Divine Providence as Mary Aikenhead did! On June 28th 2002 Outreach was notified of a cheque for \$390,000 from the Owen and Nancye Traynor Foundation.

Its purpose *"...to assist in your corporal works of mercy."*

It is on such trust and generosity as this that Outreach is built.

2000-2001: Celebrating the International Year of the Volunteer

2001 was the International Year of the Volunteer and Outreach celebrated by acknowledging the huge contribution of its 200 volunteers. Sisters Clare and Deirdre highlighted the fact that volunteers are *"ordinary people making an extraordinary contribution"*. They reminded the volunteers that they have unique role models, in the five Sisters of Charity who volunteered to come to Australia in 1838.

Just as the Sisters made a difference in this land, our volunteers make a difference now.

A Mass of Thanksgiving for Volunteers from St Vincent's & Mater Health Sydney and the Sisters of Charity Outreach was celebrated by Bishop David Cremin DD EV at St Mary's Cathedral in May where volunteers received a memento containing the inspiration of volunteering: *Volunteering is an appropriate response to the spiritual call to all people to serve.*

Our volunteers affirm this every day in the work they do for Outreach.

Continued on page 10

25 Years

of Sisters of Charity Outreach, Sydney

from page 09

2002-2003: Planning with a Vision

Outreach's five-year Strategic Plan was commenced with a focus on developing major aspects of a vision. Michael and Carol Thornber contributed their expertise to ensure that Outreach had "ownership" of the future plan.

Melissa Webber and Bruce Stephens assisted by promoting the mission and vision in the public domain. In October 2002 a public billboard was displayed at the St Vincent's Campus for a week, reminding all who saw it that Sisters of Charity Outreach is an organisation of *Compassion in Action*. This slogan has since become the Outreach Action statement. Ongoing media links through radio and print kept Outreach connected to the community by giving assistance or attracting volunteers.

Writing this gives me great joy because to the present day Michael Thornber is still connected through his role of chairing the Sisters of Charity Outreach Committee and is always ready to assist with strategic planning. Melissa Webber and Bruce Stephens have continued to be a big part of promoting Outreach and the Annual Review and each October JC Decaux continue to display our theme on the Oxford Street, billboard. We are indebted to this team for their generous ongoing pro bono contributions to our organisation.



Melissa Webber, (Holy Cow), Sr Deirdre Hickey rsc

2004-2005: 15 Years Together

Sisters of Charity Outreach celebrated "15 years Together" with a special graduation celebration for our volunteers. Sr Mary Maguire, who was the Leader of the Congregation when the proposal to build the Clinic was initiated, was guest speaker. Mary spoke openly about the struggle and pain that resulted not only in the building of the Clinic but the birth of Outreach.

Sisters St Jude Doyle, Clare Nolan and Deirdre Hickey, who followed as Executive Directors were also present to celebrate the anniversary.



Srs Deirdre, Mary Maguire, Margaret Fitzgerald and Pauline Nicholson

St Vincent's Clinic also celebrated its 15 years with a special Thanksgiving Mass. Michelle Wilson, the Executive Director of the Clinic ensured that Outreach played a very important part in these celebrations. Another focus was sharing the story and mission of Outreach to the Campus Boards, executives and staff. Pauline Noyce, one of the original Volunteers, was awarded the Order of Australia medal for her contribution to the community through 13 years of dedicated commitment to Sisters of Charity Outreach.

2010: Untold Stories

Through the theme *The Untold Stories* Sr St Jude shared her memoirs of the years from 1987-1997. These were put together and published in a little booklet.

We farewelled Mr John Wilcox who had expertly led the Committee as its Chairman for nine years. Mr Michael Thornber was nominated as the new Chairman and accepted the role.



Maria McNuff (Volunteer Coordinator), Volunteer and Sr Pauline

2011-2012: Reaching out – the mission continues to grow

Outreach took on the management of Chisholm Cottage at Westmead from the Catholic Women's League, Parramatta adding to a portfolio of services that follow the charism of Mary Aikenhead to serve the poor and the sick.

2013: Compassion – Commitment – Connection

Compassion has permeated all of our services for the past 25 years. Extending human compassion to another is binding and life giving. Many times my spirits have been lifted through seeing the staff and volunteers reach out to others. Commitment to our mission and values ignites the spark which leads to action. Commitment to the task at hand – a vision that we will make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Outreach staff and volunteers have been there when needed. Connecting our vision with the broader vision of our Christian call to be neighbours to all working with and for others to respond to new needs.



Michael Thornber, Chairman of the Sisters of Charity Outreach Committee (left) and David Robertson, Chairman of Mary Aikenhead Ministries (right).

New connections were made in the Liverpool area. An important aspect of this was meeting with the 2168 Committee who were very helpful. We had a wonderful opportunity to work on a collaborative project with young Media Design Students, led by David Agius, Academic Co-ordinator of the Billy Blue College of Design, and Bruce Stephens & Associates – Media.

2014: Continuing to read the Signs of the Times

We were reminded there is no better model for us to turn to follow than Jesus himself who was passionate in his ministry to the poor and the marginalised of his day. He always read the Signs of the Times and through his actions taught others to do the same.

A new service *Time out for carers*, which works in partnership with the Social Work Department at St Vincent's Hospital, began. The service provides personal contact, support and social gatherings for carers who are staying in St Vincent's Hospital accommodation.

A project Officer was appointed to the Miller Centre to research opportunities in the Liverpool LGA and to establish new Outreach services to meet community needs in line with the Mission, Values and Strategic Direction of Outreach and Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

In July, a New Arrival Program commenced providing awareness of the local area, fostering connections between the participants and their community and services, such as the local library and recreational and cultural facilities. The group continues to grow and meets weekly and to enjoy a variety of organised activities and outings.

2015: Celebrating 25 Years

The celebration of our 25th year began with our Opening Mass which was attended by a large group of volunteers, friends, colleagues, sisters and staff from across St Vincent's Campus. Michael Thornber welcomed everyone warmly.

Father Darryl Mackie celebrated the Mass with Sister Angela Burke leading the singing. Sister Mary Maguire gave a frank and moving homily recalling the painful discernment that she and her Council felt prior to approving St Vincent's Clinic. Mary expressed her gratitude by saying:

"Today we are full of gratitude – grateful to God, and to each one who ministers in the Clinic today, and to all those who have contributed in any way to the building up of the Clinic and its spirit. As we give thanks we ask a blessing on our ministry in Outreach, as a new year commences, and we express again our gratitude for the past 25 years."



Fr Darryl Mackie, (Chaplain), assisted by Sr Jan O'Grady

She spoke of her own involvement:

"My own involvement in the story of the commencement of this ministry is similar to the story of each one's life. It was a messy business – consisting of delights, disappointments, success, failure, feelings of importance, feeling useless..."

Life presents unforeseen challenges and, dare I say it – we often have to compromise, adapt and change in order to bring that ideal to a practical conclusion.

The hardest concept to take in was how a building consisting of strata-titled rooms and clinics for doctors could be an apostolic work of the Sisters of Charity. We could see the great benefits the Clinic would bring to the wider community and we wanted to be part of the concept. So it was these discussions among ourselves and our advisors and talking things through with the Planning Committee of Doctors who would be part of the project that the idea of a ministry of reaching out to others was born."

Mary called on her deep spirituality and humanity to convey her feelings of gratitude:

"Let's come to today, and see the good that has grown over the years – See the people helped by the genius and expertise of the health professionals.

See the generosity and dedication of the Sisters and all the volunteers who keep their eyes, hands and hearts, on bringing good news to the oppressed. Binding up the broken hearted.

Releasing those who have become imprisoned by others or who imprison themselves, so few of us are entirely free!"

After Mass, everyone enjoyed catching up with friends over morning tea while Sisters Margaret Fitzgerald and Genevieve Walsh circled the room catching special moments with their cameras. There was a happy buzz in the room as everyone recalled memories of the past 25 years.

The end of an era

Since 1990 a Sister of Charity had been appointed as Executive Director of Outreach:

- Sister St Jude Doyle 1990-1997, followed by:
- Sisters Clare Nolan and Deirdre Hickey, Co-Directors 1998-2003
- Sister Margaret Fitzgerald 2004-2012
- Sister Pauline Nicholson 2013-2015 April – Farewell

Each Director has brought colour and personality to this position. Each has been passionate about serving the poor and marginalised and has had a strong focus on keeping alive our mission and values.

It was with a heavy heart when I came to the decision when it was time for me to move on. I was also aware that there was a possibility that there may not be a Sister of Charity replacement.

As I move from Sisters of Charity Outreach in early April, I take with me an abundance of treasured memories. It has been a privilege and an enriching experience to be part of the Outreach team.

During the 25 years, many Sisters of Charity have been part of the Outreach team as a staff member or a volunteer. We sincerely thank each one for their continuing and significant contribution to the development and mission over the years.

Appointment of General Manager – a new era

Mr Gary Sillett was recently appointed General Manager of Sisters of Charity Outreach.

Gary is an experienced manager who has worked with a range of not-for-profit organisations. His most recent role was a General Manager of a small international aid organisation which focussed on using education to empower women and youth in developing countries.

Gary has the challenging but exciting responsibility of guiding the organisation as it transitions to lay leadership. We are confident that he will bring many gifts to Outreach.

I wish him the very best and every success.

Sr Margaret Cooney rsc

2 October 1928-27 April 2015

by Angela Burke rsc

Margaret Cooney entered eternal life soon after breakfast at St Joseph's Village, Auburn on Monday 27th April 2015.

Eileen Browne, who had been sister-companion to Margaret for five years reflected in the Eulogy that, since she had struggled through a long period of illness, which she had borne bravely for over twenty years, it was a blessing that the end came quickly. Eileen recalled her visit to Margaret the afternoon before she died –

"..although her breathing was somewhat laboured she was in good spirits. We looked at the photo of her family and she was taken with the pink cushions on her chair. It was a pleasant visit which was pleasing for me because there were other times when she was quite stressed. However peace has come at last."

While she had been able to conceal from everyone, even her family, that her given name was actually Winifred Margaret, her long commitment to the Mission and Values of the Sisters of Charity was well known to many.

This was remembered and shared at both the Vigil and Requiem Mass. Francie, (Sr Francis Xavier), recalled school days when she and Margaret played basketball together at Bethlehem College. Perhaps thoughts about a religious vocation were stirring within Margaret then.

Memories were also shared by several other Sisters, who were former students of Margaret, known to them then as Sr Austina. Margaret taught at Ashfield, Hurstville, Concord, Potts Point, St Mary's Cathedral, Liverpool, Katoomba and Auburn. Many local ladies who were her students at Auburn attended the Funeral. Margaret's only interstate assignment was at Mount St Michael's College, Ashgrove, where she brought 'a breath of fresh air' because of her youth and enthusiasm.



She was regarded by all as an excellent teacher of Senior Geography, French and Mathematics and an enthusiastic coach of basketball teams. One special quality for which Margaret was respected by every student was her absolute justice and fairness in her dealings with each one.

In Eileen's unavoidable absence, the Eulogy which she wrote, was delivered by Margaret Beirne who included her own experience of being mentored by Margaret as a young Mathematics teacher and recalled the organisational skills which Margaret showed as a key organiser of the Sisters of Charity Combined Sports. There were many Primary and Secondary schools engaged in intense competition and a high degree of wisdom and diplomacy was required.

Margaret had spent over twenty years at St Joseph's Village where she enjoyed reading crime fiction, knitting clown dolls and visiting other Sisters. Up until the last two years she enjoyed doing the Reading and Psalm at the weekly Mass at the Village. She did this with confidence and clarity as she had done for many years in various Parishes.

Mary Aikenhead declared venerable

From page 1

Being declared **Venerable** is the second of four steps in the Catholic Church's Canonisation process. A person is declared Venerable when it is established that the person had practised virtue (theological and cardinal) to an heroic degree.

Servant of God is the title given by the Pope when he gives permission for the opening of the cause of a person's Sainthood. Mary Aikenhead was given this title in 1921.

Beatification is the third step towards Canonisation. It is a decree permitting the public honouring at the level of the local church, of a Servant of God whose virtue to a heroic degree or martyrdom have been recognised. It is also a recognition that the person can intercede on behalf of individuals who pray in their name.

Canonisation is the definitive decree of admission of a Servant of God among the canon of saints and a declaration that the person should be publicly honoured by the Universal Church.

Her chosen motto was *'Lord, thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love You.'* She was called on to live out this motto perhaps more in sickness than in health, but certainly by a long life of dedication.

In her concluding prayer, Eileen says what is in the hearts of many grateful people.

'God rest you, Margaret, as you are now with the One who called you by name.

You are very dear to Him.'



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