

Published by the Missionary Franciscan Sisters, 4 Hennessy Lane, Kedron, Q 4031



## Dear Friends,

Time to say hello again from this wintry patch of God's beautiful Gippsland. We've been waking up to crisp, freezing mornings - freezing, yes, but I still love to hear the crackle of frost underfoot and see the snow on the nearby hills!

If St Francis were here, he would certainly say, "This is perfect joy". Some mornings, though, when Brother Body objects to the icy conditions, it is not always easy to agree with the Saint. However, not everything came easy to the little man of Assisi!

At the beginning of his own conversion, St Francis was torn between two paths - some people were urging him to devote himself exclusively to a life of prayer, while others were telling him that he should walk the streets of this world and preach the Gospel.

Finally, after taking all of this before the Lord in prayer, Francis laid out the matter before St Clare and Brother Sylvester. They were prayerful people who could help him in an objective way to see in which direction the Lord was leading him.

Clare and Sylvester urged Francis to follow the way of Jesus: to live in intimate communion with the Father in prayer, and to preach to the people the message that God spoke to his heart. They told him he must go the way that Jesus went - to love the world that Jesus loved, to enjoy it and delight in it - to find in everyone and everything the presence of a loving Father - to be a living prayer.

They told him, "Your prayer must be grounded in life, and your life grounded in prayer. Your prayer must be ministerial, and your ministry prayerful."

With this response from his two friends, Francis knew that this was God's answer to his prayer. Let us, too, as followers of the little man of Assisi, listen to Clare and Sylvester speaking to us today, taking their words to heart - let our prayer be grounded in our lives, and our lives grounded in our prayer!

- Sr Liz

## A Belated Legend

A late 14th Century legend tells us how St Francis's mother, Giovanna (known to us as Lady Pica) being unable to give birth to her first child, was invited by an unknown pilgrim to go down into a stable nearby.

It was here, on a cold winter's morning, between the years 1181 and 1182, that Francis was born.



*The stable where legend has it St Francis was born.*

Legend also grew around the Baptism of Francis. It is said that the mysterious pilgrim made another appearance at the Baptismal ceremony, and asked to hold the infant in his arms. (Near the Baptismal font, in the Basilica of Saint Rufino, there is a stone behind a grate, where an impression can be seen, said to have been made by the pilgrim's knee.)

Lady Pica had great devotion to St John the Baptist, and wished him to be the protector of her son during his lifetime. Thus she had him baptized with the name of JOHN.

Pietro Bernadone was away in France at the time of his son's birth, buying silks and other precious materials for his shop. Francis was just learning to walk when his father returned. Although he was proud of his first-born, Pietro intensely disliked the name "John." He said the French were an elegant and chivalrous people, and it was France that had helped him become the rich and successful merchant that he was - he insisted that the name John be changed to Francis.



*The baptismal font.*

Lady Pica knew her husband's strong character - he was a man used to having his own way and who would permit no discussion on the matter, so she quietly submitted to their child being re-named "Francesco."

There is only one Baptismal font in the town of Assisi. Even today, every citizen who chooses to do so, is baptised here. (However, the parish churches in the various hamlets nearby all have Baptismal fonts.) This Baptistery is considered one of the most venerated reminders of the life of St Francis. Here, many of his companions from Assisi were also baptized, including St Clare. The last saint of Assisi to be baptized at this font was St Gabriel of the Addolorata in 1838.

## Call to action

Does my little bit count? Does it make any difference? I believe it does! I read recently that the astronauts who landed on the moon looked back through space and could see Mother Earth - our home. They described it as a small, fragile, blue gift from God that we must learn to care for and to share in peace. Are we doing this? Or, more to the point, am I doing anything? This is what I plan to do, so that these words jump off this paper into ACTION!

I am going to look into my cupboard full of clothes and find respectful ways to give these clothes to someone who really needs them - not to my sisters, but to some struggling woman - not my old clothes that don't fit anymore, but clothes that I really like, but do not need ..... and I will pray for the many families in the world who struggle to clothe themselves.

I will make myself aware of all the good food we buy and store away in our kitchen cupboards. I will try to cook less, and be satisfied with what we have at the moment, and I will pray for the hungry of the world.

I will try to make others aware of the needs of their brothers and sisters, the needs of caring for the land that we have, the need to challenge our leaders in caring for our country and its beautiful environment.

These things may seem very small actions to help our world with its huge environmental problems, but I believe that if I am faithful to them, they will be like rays of hope, helping me to see the world and our neighbours in a different way.



- Sr JO SCANLAN MFIC

## Congratulations Sisters

Sisters Mary Quentin and Carmel, both living in Pottsville, NSW, have been working as volunteers for Telecross for 10 years. (This service is a branch of the Red Cross.) Each morning, these two sisters have been phoning someone who is living alone or who is frail or ill. They have checked that the person is doing well and then they have chatted for a little while, exchanging news and often a good joke or two! If the person they are calling does not answer or is feeling unwell, then Telecross is notified immediately and help is obtained for those who need it.



*Carmel (left) and Quentin*

These two sisters have really enjoyed this ministry, and over a decade have made contact with many wonderful and inspiring people. In appreciation for their efforts, both sisters were recently awarded a special Medal from Telecross for their faithful and cheerful service to the frail and elderly.

At the end of last year, a number of volunteers gathered at the Catholic Centre adjacent to St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane, for the Annual Presentation of various Awards. Among the many areas covered is one for Pastoral Care in Hospitals. Sr Mary Clara (who lives in Merrimac on the Gold Coast) was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition for her ten years of service at Robina Hospital.

In the photo, we see Clara receiving her Certificate from Fr Peter Meneely, who is the Moderator of Centacare.



As all three sisters are over 80 themselves, they deserve our admiration, as well as our congratulations, for the years spent so selflessly and lovingly in their ministry to others.

## New Missions

There is always great rejoicing when new missions are opened, and this year we opened two in the Diocese of Toowoomba. Sr Maureen Andrews set out for Cunnamulla in the far west of Queensland - 900km from Brisbane, and Sr Patricia Cordwell took up residence in the city itself.

I asked Maureen to share some of her ministry with us, and am amazed at how much she has accomplished in two months, as you will be too. (Patricia is "going great" as well, and will tell us about her work in the next issue.)



*The Cunnamulla home of Sr Maureen.*

Maureen writes: "Life has been quite busy as I settle into my new ministry. I am loving the many facets of mission that have opened up to me during my short stay here. Since my arrival at the end of April, I have baptised one infant, and am in the process of preparing another family for their child's baptism next month. In this short time, I have had the privilege - although a sad one - of burying three parishioners - one a victim of a car accident, the other a six-week-old baby and recently an Aboriginal man who died of Gillian Barre Syndrome.

When our Priest comes the 200km from Charleville to Cunnamulla, he stays with us for a week, celebrating Mass and being available for Reconciliation. When he is not here, I do two Eucharistic services during the week, and two on weekends.

At the moment, I am organizing a Sacramental Programme with the school and the Parish, and am on a committee working towards having the Hospital reclassified as a multi-purpose Health Centre.

Please keep me in your prayers, as I accompany my Cunnamulla family on their journey of faith, and as I face the challenges that present themselves each day in this varied and wonderful ministry."

## Sr Philomena returns

Last December, Sr Philomena Conroy (known to us before as Sr Mary Pacifica) returned to Australia for a short visit. She had first come here from Ireland in 1947, and returned to her native land in 1983, where she was stationed at Assisi House - a retirement home in Dublin.

It was good news when one of the ladies at Assisi House wished to come to Australia to visit her daughter. She needed a companion for the long journey, and much to everyone's delight, Philomena was asked to accompany her. So, after 28 years away, we welcomed her back on Australian soil.



Philomena had a wonderful time catching up with the sisters and many of her old friends. Naturally, she found much had changed in her absence - our convent at Kedron had expanded so much, she said she often had to ask directions to different parts of the building!!

After the extremely cold weather of Ireland, she found the Queensland summer quite a challenge. While she was here, she witnessed the devastation caused by the floods in many parts of the State.

The month sped by too quickly, and soon it was time to return to the wet and cold of the Emerald Isle, where she wrote back to say she had caught a nasty cold with the change of climate. Phil, it was so good to have you back again with us after so many years. We still miss you and the lilt of your lovely Irish accent. So, until we meet again, God hold you in the palm of His hand.

*Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.*

*- Rabirdranath Tangure*

## I have run the race ...

In a small notebook found in her bedside cupboard, Sr Mary Kiernan had written these words: "Try to put your feet into Jesus' footprints, Am I willing to walk behind the Lord and let Him determine the way?"

Those sentences could be a description of Kiernan's own commitment to her faith, to her religious community, to her vows and to the people among whom she lived and worked. She was born 85 years ago in County Kerry, Ireland.



She was the youngest of four, and was baptized Catherine Brigid McAuliffe. At 17, she entered the novitiate in Bloomfield and was just 22 when she set out for Australia in 1947. (Her companions on the journey were Sisters Mary Quentin and Pacifica!) Kiernan began her teaching at our school in Bardon, studying for her teaching certificate at the same time. She remained a dedicated teacher for 47 years, both in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

When she finished her teaching ministry, Kiernan embraced the pastoral care of the villages of Aitape and Lemieng in PNG, where she gave her all to the people she loved and served.

Kiernan was a community person, who enriched the lives of the sisters with a desire to serve, with an ability to accept the other and forgive where necessary. She was flexible and open, and was always ready to let go of her own dreams for the sake of the wider picture.

Her readiness to fulfill the will of God was part of the simplicity of her life. In the words of one of our sisters: "Who could find a more valiant woman - a more dedicated Franciscan - a truer and more supportive friend?" In our own missionary efforts, let us be guided, inspired and led by her spirit. Dear Kiernan, rest in peace

## New leadership team

At our Provincial Chapter last November we elected a new Leadership Team.



In this photo we see (from left) our Australian Leader Sr Pauline Robinson, with her councillors Sr Cecilia Prest, Sr Catherine White and Sr Karen Bourke.

## Conclusion

As we journey through the next six months of 2011, may the good Lord guide and protect each one of you every step of the way and -

*May you recognize in your life  
the presence, power and light of your  
soul.*

*May you realize that you are never  
alone,  
that your soul in its brightness and  
belonging*

*connects you intimately with the  
universe.*

*May you have respect  
for your own individuality and dif-  
ference.*

*May you learn to see yourself  
with the same delight, pride and  
expectation  
with which God sees you in every  
moment.*

Anam Cara

Love,  
Sr Liz