



# Australian Circle Newsletter

Missionary Franciscan Sisters

## Welcome from Pauline

Dear Sisters and friends,  
We look forward to sharing with you once again a snapshot of the people and events that are part of our Governance Circle. It is a time to relive the Jubilee Celebrations of three of our Sisters and learn of the breadth of the ministries carried out by our Sisters. We see that age is no barrier to being involved in many ministry activities. At our Governance Circle Meeting in February we began planning for the future of Mt Alvernia College. We look forward to the visit of Tom Hartle ofm from Butler in the United States who will give a retreat on the Tavola of St Clare to the majority of the Sisters in our Governance Circle. He will also give inputs and twilight retreats to the Staff of our three Franciscan Schools – St Anthony's, Padua and Mt Alvernia. We call these Three School Communities FOTH (Franciscans on the Hill) because that is where we are located. However, more about that in our next newsletter in August!



Cecilia Prestashewsky is now the new collector of stories for this newsletter. I hope that you enjoy meeting more of the Australian Sisters from “DownUnder.”

Pauline Robinson, Australian Leader

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## Caring for our residents at the Delamore Retirement Village



Ozcare was created in 1996 to operate the government-funded services of the St Vincent de Paul Society (St Vinnie's). The name is a reminder of Frederic Ozanam, founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and Oz, the slang name used for Australia.

Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) are individually planned packages of care tailored to help frail older people to remain living in their own homes. They are funded by the Australian Government in such a way that services are available at minimal cost to people who need help. The types of services that may be provided include personal care, social support, transport to appointments, home help, meal preparation, etc.

To be eligible for a care package, an Aged Care Assessment Team first assesses a person as requiring at least low care. If the person wishes to remain in their own home, they may be referred to a service provider such as Ozcare. The Ozcare team will negotiate with the person to plan the “care package” to suit the person's needs.

Sr. Patricia Treacy

# A Day to Remember

Francine Shaw shares, "The Golden Jubilee celebrations held in Kedron on the morning of 3rd December 2011 for Srs. Patricia Cordwell, Liz Roberts and myself were truly memorable. Franciscan hospitality shone as about 180 guests, including sisters, families, Associates and friends gathered." Liz says, "It was wonderful to have had my cousin, Fr. Chris Roberts, Scalabrinian friend, Fr. Giovanni Pagnin, and family friend Fr. Jerome Watt as the three celebrants for the Jubilee Mass in the parish church. Fr. Giovanni's homily - "How beautiful on the mountaintop are the feet of those who bring Good News" was so appropriate and so meaningful."



The celebration in the parish hall continued in the same joyous atmosphere we experienced in the church, with lovely decorations prepared by the Sisters and delightful light refreshments prepared by our caterer Sandra Tilbury and served with the assistance of her young daughter Maddie and two impeccably mannered students from Padua Boys College. The Jubilarians received many words of appreciation from family and friends who were delighted with the whole celebration. They were thrilled to hear the stories of the three Sisters, and especially in learning about their diverse ministry

responses as MFICs, and rejoiced in their 50 years of commitment as Religious. One visitor observed, "while today the Sisters have decreased in numbers, they are not short on commitment, intelligence and wisdom!"

The three Sisters were delighted to have had so many relatives there to celebrate with them. Liz also had classmates from her Mt. Alvernia "class of 58", and several of her special Italian friends from Brisbane, one of whom made her



"Italian" Jubilee cake, and another - Camillo Impellizzeri - who gave the speech on her behalf. It was also great to have had so many of our Associates there to rejoice with us. Fr. Chris has said many times since how impressed he was at hearing of the wonderful, but diverse ministries these Jubilarians have been engaged in over the last 50 years. Running through her head all day were the words - "Lord, it is so good for us to be here" - and it truly was!



Patricia's memories of the Jubilee celebrations are ones of elation and contentment. Like Francine and Elizabeth she remembers the joyous atmosphere and says she was "lost in the delight of it all." Her brother Mick was able to be at the celebration despite his illness which was a great joy for Patricia. Sadly Mick died shortly afterwards but the happy memory of that day together will stay with her. After 50 years Patricia is able to

say, "I Joined a Missionary Community, and I was privileged to have had the opportunity to minister in a wide variety of countries. I have received from others far more than I have given. I can honestly say it has been a good life, with God on my side!"



Contributed by Srs.  
Francine, Liz and Patricia



# Governance Circle Meeting In Partnership for the Future?

Over 50 years ago when the Missionary Franciscan Sisters were planning Mt Alvernia College at Kedron, the Sisters turned for advice to the Sisters of Mercy who had so successfully established All Hallows College in Fortitude Valley. At our gathering on the 4th February the Franciscans once again called upon the Mercy Sisters for assistance with future planning.

Sister Anne Hetherington RSM spoke about the newly formed Mercy Partners which has been established by the Mercy Congregations in Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton to oversee the school and hospitals under their sponsorship. A partnership with this organisation for the future sponsorship of Mt Alvernia is one of the options the Sisters are exploring at this time..

Sr Anne led us through the process of joining Mercy Partners with great expertise and clarity. She reminded us that for ministries such as schools to be Catholic, they must be sponsored by an entity which is considered by the Church to be an ecclesial entity. The name Public Juridic Person (PJP) is the canonical name given to such entities. Such entities include dioceses, religious congregations, and some lay associations.

At this time, as many religious congregations diminish in size and expertise, it is necessary for them to find another canonical entity to sponsor the ministries they founded and loved. Sr Anne noted that the reasons religious congregations consider entrusting ministries to Mercy Partners is not only the reality of diminishment, and the desire to see our ministries flourish into the future, but also the belief that lay men and women have a significant contribution to make to the Church in the area of governance.

The great benefit of such a partnership would be that Mt Alvernia would retain its present Franciscan spirit and spirituality as well as the management and governance structures already in place. The significant change would be that the reserve powers presently held by the Sisters would migrate to the Council of Mercy Partners of which Sr Anne is presently the Chairperson.

Since the presentation was of greatest interest to Mt Alvernia, directors of the College Board and Leadership Team members joined the sisters. It was understood that today was one of the first steps in a long process of ensuring suitable sponsors for the school when we are not any longer able to take that responsibility. It was a step that the sisters wanted to take in tandem with the men and women who already administer and govern the college so professionally and with such great regard for the charism of the Sisters.

Sr Catherine White mfc

## News from our Ministries

### *1) Mary Went in Haste ...to Visit ... (Luke 1)*

As I prepared to share my story with you I recalled the story of Mary in St Luke's account of the Visitation: as soon as Mary heard that her cousin Elizabeth was having a baby, she went off in haste into the hill country to help her ... carrying the Word within her. In my work as a Missionary in Papua New Guinea, especially after the sisters moved out of schools in the 1970s, this was a story I frequently pondered as it helped me to go in haste over the mountains to reach distant villages bringing the Good News ... not only in teaching but also in human friendship and support.

I went to Papua New Guinea straight from the Novitiate with great energy and enthusiasm but after forty-eight years the haste began to slow up and the bones began to cry for attention and so I returned to my homeland, Australia.

While I had certainly slowed down, I was far from ready to give up so I began to look around for needs I could respond to here in Australia. Outreach to people has always been basic to my ministry and here in our complex at Kedron, developed over twenty years ago as Delamore Retirement Community, I was surrounded by people some of whom are quite elderly and can no longer make their way to the church nearby. Sr M Kiernan had started having Communion Liturgy on Sunday mornings and I...



...began by helping her with the group that gathered and bringing the Eucharist to individuals who were totally confined to their units. I found this a happy extension of what I was used to and when Sr M. Kiernan was unable to carry on this ministry I was ready to take over and I have found this very fulfilling. Calls to visit the less mobile residents have been many and provide opportunity for offering human and spiritual support.



What else could I do? St Anthony's Primary School is right next door to us so in answer to a request from the Principal for Sisters to visit and become a presence in the school, I began going over to help some children with their reading. Having this regular contact with the children and knowing the value of ensuring that children can read well gave me great joy. Though it is many years since I moved out of teaching as a formal ministry.

In Papua New Guinea I drove trucks and rode a motor bike but on my return to Australia I decided I would not drive any more. To my great delight the community presented me with a motorised Scooter. What a blessing! I can do home visitation in the parish – visit the sick and take Holy Communion when requested. The scooter gives me a renewed freedom and a much greater possibility for outreach. Visiting the nursing homes where we have sisters in care is another opening for me which I appreciate especially since two of those sisters, now suffering from dementia, spent many years on Papua New Guinea and I am able to reach back with them into times and ministries to meet people and review situations they remember with joy.

We surely do not know what plans the Lord has for us. I have found this very true as each day is full of surprises.

Sr Joyce Fenton mfc

## 2) One Day at a Time

Since retiring from teaching, I have been privileged to accompany on their journey people who may be homeless, mentally ill, tortured by addictions, terminally ill, or living with HIV/AIDS. Sometimes such people for whatever reason are rejected by family and friends and are relegated to the fringes of society, at times by choice.

"Cana" Communities, whose name is inspired by the Gospel story where the brokenness of peoples' lives became celebration and forgiveness, provide crisis accommodation, companionship, meals, community prayer, accompanying members to court and visiting them in hospital or prison. The celebration of Christmas, Easter and Birthdays is very important. At the cutting of his birthday cake recently, a thirty five year old told me this was the first time ever his birthday had been celebrated.

At the Sacred Heart Hospice where Mass is celebrated daily, I usually help out at the Day Centre where terminally ill people come from their homes or from the wards upstairs. After a welcome "cuppa" on arrival, the patients are then engaged in activities or relaxed through gentle massage or physiotherapy. After lunch together, the patients again board the Hospice minibus looking forward to meeting again next time.

CSN (Community Support Network) which is part of the AIDS Council of New South Wales has clients who are able to live at home longer through the help of their trained volunteers. Basic support is given such as help with shopping, cooking, housework or just by lending a listening ear.

Each of these ministries can cause me sorrow but also a deep joy when I recognize Jesus in each person.



Sr.Marguerite O'Brien



### 3) Asylum Seekers.

The issue of Asylum

Seekers in Australia is a very volatile one at the present time. We are very close to Asia and we have a vast coastline. Australia is a very attractive option. I live in Sydney and teach at the Asylum Seekers' Centre at Surry Hills – a suburb in the inner city.

The Mission Statement of the Asylum Seekers' Centre states: "Our Mission is to provide a welcoming environment and practical support for community based asylum seekers residing in New South Wales while at the same time pursuing social justice outcomes for Asylum Seekers."

A.S.C. really is a place of welcome. People from many countries meet here and there is a great sense of camaraderie. Many (most?) of the clients have suffered trauma or torture or both. They have left a country that they love and frequently their loved ones too. This sadness is often visible in their eyes. They also have to deal with the fear of being sent away from Australia.

Teaching English is one of the services offered. On my day I try to make it fun – if learning such a "strange" language as English can be fun!!! One has to be flexible – sometimes there can be ten students, sometimes one. The lesson you prepare is not always the lesson you teach!

Francis shared his life with all kinds of people – rich and poor, young and old, people from near and far were treated with respect. It enriches me to be among these people from so many countries and cultures

**Sr.Rita Johnston**



I started at Mater Children's Hospital in March 1986 and I work in a general surgical ward.



### 4) Nursing for 26 years....

When I started there, in what is now known as the old hospital, we nursed children/teenagers aged from about 18th months to about 16 years who needed surgery, which was orthopaedic, neuro, general, or plastic surgery. With brain injuries there is often a long period of rehab with regular physio and other therapies. One child I remember, was with us for over a year. In her case it was because her family couldn't take her home, and there were no places in Brisbane that could take her with special needs. Most of our patients get better, but some unfortunately have to visit us pretty frequently. I do prefer to nurse surgical patients, perhaps that's because I like to see results, and generally the quicker the better.

About ten years ago we moved from the old Children's Hospital to a new one. Things were much better then than they had been in the old hospital but for a whole number of reasons, it took some of us quite a while to get used to. About six years ago it was decided to build a Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane and that is expected to open, next to the Mater Children's, towards the end of 2014. Anticipating a combining of paediatric services in Brisbane, the paediatric Cardiac ward at Prince Charles Hospital has been closed, and these patients now come to the Mater, and the children who have cancer now all go to the Royal Brisbane. Also, the nursing staff are having to make many changes to paper-work and computer recording procedures, but basically the care is very much the same. It just all takes longer.

Over the years many things have changed in many ways. Some things I wish had changed haven't, and some things I wish hadn't changed, have. The most important thing is that the patients get the best possible care.

**Sr.Sue Sullivan**

# Elizabeth Hayes Promotion

Some time back we anticipated holding discussions on our 2009 publication, *Elizabeth Hayes: Pioneer Franciscan Journalist* or of sharing observations on how it is being received. You are invited to forward some feedback for another edition of this newsletter. Francine received a letter from Veronica (Weygand) outlining her appreciation and observations after reading our book. With the writer's permission, here is part of what Veronica sent.

"I finished the book today and appreciate it so much! I would like to share a few thoughts ... First - thank you - for all of your time, effort and love which clearly went into the book. You have truly gifted the community with a scholarly work that unfolds an aspect of Elizabeth's giftedness which I had never before appreciated fully. By setting the publication of the *Annals* in the context of the world and church situations as well as the literature of the day, you broadened the scope of her accomplishment.

The background of the social issues which you spelled out in Chapter 3, especially pg. 50-52, says so much about Elizabeth and her attempt to respond to these issues. They easily translate to today's world situation and also challenge me! The challenges she faced in undertaking all of the aspects involved in publishing the *Annals*, especially for a woman, reveal so much about her. Your quote from Mermillod on pg. 72 was powerful and I couldn't help but compare what was said about the 'power of the press' at that time with the power of the web etc. today. Again, it revealed for me your point of Elizabeth's commitment to the Apostolate of the Press and how insightful she was in following this route.

I thought you handled Elizabeth's lack of communication with the Sisters so diplomatically on pg. 241. You acknowledged the pain on all sides and the fact that we will never know the "why". Your book gives me a deeper appreciation for Mother Columba as well, another powerful woman. I also appreciate your end notes after each chapter - so thorough and helpful. I could go on and on but ... let me just thank you again for sharing this aspect of Elizabeth with us. I am most grateful for letting me know Elizabeth better through your book."

Recently Francine e-mailed a personal letter to each Catholic Secondary college principal in Queensland. Replies and book orders have begun to flow showing that principals are interested in putting another pioneering Victorian woman back into church history by adding our book to their libraries. One of the first to reply and to direct her librarian to make a purchase was Dr Lee-Anne Perry, principal of All Hallows School and former principal of Mt. Alvernia College.

## Elizabeth Hayes Pioneer Franciscan Journalist



Pauline J. Shaw

