



Australian Circle Newsletter

*Missionary
Franciscan
Sisters*

Welcome from Pauline



Dear Sisters and friends,
It was good to meet up with other Leaders at the Extended General Council Forum in Canada. It was a time where we shared how we had been implementing the General Chapter Mandate and plans for further implementation. It was also an opportunity to support each other in our Leadership roles in this time

of rapid change and new challenges. In this second issue of our Australian Newsletter we will share some of the stories of the past four months and introduce you to some more Sisters and their ministries. Happy reading!

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Dear Readers, this is the first edition we are publishing on our own. Apologies for the length this time but we hope you will enjoy the read. God bless all Editor.

Celebration of Elizabeth Hayes' Day with New Associate.

We had a joyful coming together at Kedron to celebrate our Foundress' feast day on May 5th instead of on the 6th as more sisters and associates could be present that day. The highlight of the morning was the reception of our newest associate in the Kedron convent chapel. Afterwards we gathered around in our lovely Centre and spilled out onto the "La Foresta" patio to share a barbeque dinner perfectly cooked by Srs.

Pauline and Margaret Rose. Now I'll let Jo speak for herself.



Sr. Margaret Rose

Editor.

By way of an introduction my name is Jo Wuth and on 5 May 2012 I was officially welcomed as an associate of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception following my nomination by my treasured friend Sr Joyce Fenton. My connection with the Missionary Franciscan Sisters began over 6 years ago when I met Sr Joyce by chance before Mass. At that time I was the carer of my best friend Maureen Coustley who had had a chronic illness from birth and was extremely ill. As a consequence of that meeting and through the work of the Holy Spirit, Sr Joyce supported Maureen and I through the final 2 years of Maureen's life offering us both physical assistance and spiritual support which we both valued and acknowledged. I cared for Maureen for 23 years and her loss was over-whelming. Sr Joyce's friendship and guidance was my strong-hold during the journey of my grief and our friendship continues. I thank Sr. Joyce for this and for facilitating my involvement as an associate.



Sr. Jo Scanlan

It was certainly an exciting day with a wonderful gathering of the sisters and associates. I was at times overwhelmed by the love and joy of that day. Can I say that the lunch that followed was sumptuous!

This blessing is a significant step in my spiritual life offering me opportunities of much growth.



Jo Wuth with Srs. Clara Condon and Cecilia Prest



Through my association with the Missionary Franciscan Sisters in the Kedron Parish, I have learnt about and witnessed the Franciscan way of life and ethos. Sharing these Franciscan ideals, we help each other on a journey of spiritual discovery leading us to Christ.

I want to thank the Sisters and Associates for welcoming me into their community in such a vibrant way and for lighting the candle within me. With their help and God's blessing may I seek to ignite God's flame in others.

Blessings,

Jo Wuth

On the Road at Eighty

As the saying goes, "Once you're over the top of the hill you pick up speed." That is a fact, as now I'm in my eighties life sure flies past very quickly. God, however, is so good to me as I can still drive. This enables me to visit sisters and friends who live at some distance from the convent, and who are getting old (don't mention me!!!) and who don't drive. A visit here and there for a day, an overnight stay or going for a few days really enlivens me and



gives me great joy (I hope the feelings are reciprocated!). Furthermore, being able to drive I can visit our sick sisters in the nursing homes and hospital and take sisters who need to go to the doctor or for shopping. As my life is slowly coming to the end of the road, I can say thank God for my faith, my vocation and my sisters.

Where there's a will there's a way, and

Crea has it all down to a fine art - her wheeled walker gets folded up and stored in the boot in no time at all (while I'm still figuring out how to fold it) and sometimes there are more added to it; the boot door handle is neatly hooked and pulled down with a bent coat hanger that does the job perfectly, and passengers are given time to make themselves comfortable and "belt up" for the journey which may be just down the road or a hundred plus kilometres away!

Editor

Mt Alvernia College Pilgrimage 2013 - Following Elizabeth Hayes

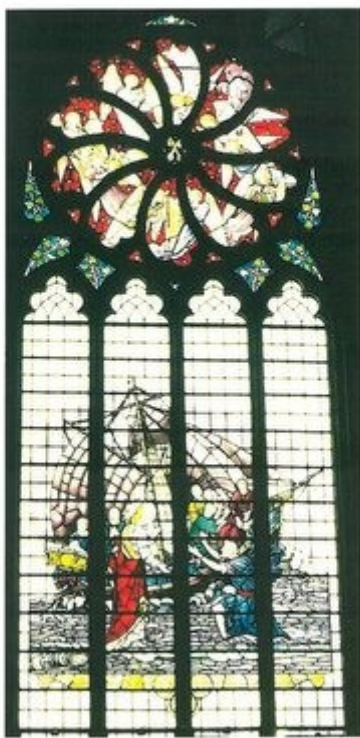
Teachers from Mt Alvernia, Kedron, after experiencing a Pilgrimage to Assisi and the Rieti Valley in September 2010 have asked that I prepare a Pilgrimage for them to places of significance to Elizabeth Hayes in September 2013.

2013 is a significant year for anniversaries for Elizabeth. She was born in 1823 and founded our Community in 1873. Therefore it will be 190 years since her birth and 140 years since our foundation.

The Pilgrims will visit Guernsey, London, Oxford, Wantage, Assisi and Rome. On the final day we will gather at our Generalate where the Pilgrims will visit the archives and the memorabilia in the Generalate itself, and be given a reflection on Elizabeth Hayes to finalise their experience.



GUERNSEY FOLLOWING ELIZABETH HAYES Pilgrim's Guide



MFIC Charism Renewal Promotion

Our High School Mt Alvernia, named the Library/Resource Centre "Elizabeth Hayes" in 1994 to celebrate the anniversary of her death. They have dedicated a week to Elizabeth Hayes around the date of 6th May. New students coming into the school are given information about the foundation of Mt Alvernia in 1956 by the Missionary Franciscan Sisters and in consequence about Elizabeth Hayes our Foundress. Teachers are very interested in experiencing her journey as they did that of Francis in Assisi so they can better communicate this to their students.

Sr. Pauline Robinson

“As Often as You Did it to One of These..”.

I have often thought that there will be no one left to attend my funeral in the Parish because I have sent them all ahead of me!! I have met so many wonderful and faith filled



people over 40 years and what an example they have all been. It is so rewarding and inspiring even today to see the faith and acceptance of the aged and sick as time here runs out.

I met up with a lady recently whom I helped over 30 years ago and she greeted me with “You turned my life around”. Can’t remember how I did that but I do remember going to court with her and finding some clothes for her to wear before the judge. I hope God’s memory is better than mine!

Since retiring from Parish activities I have continued to visit the sick, Nursing Homes and the elderly in a limited way and mostly keep in contact with those unable to go out or unable to move around freely.

Yes, thank God, my legs still work but not as well as they did once. The buses now receive a regular income from my activities and there is one delightful driver who greets me when he is on the hospital route with “Good morning young lady” . This is actually a contradiction as when I alight he adds, “Mind the gap young lady and be careful as you step down”.

I meet such wonderful people and they are so loyal always reminding me of past memories which I have completely forgotten. The prayer list is now so long that I just say “Lord for all those I served who have met up with You and those still around waiting for Your greeting”.

Sr. Margaret Rubenach

Home Frontiers of the Gospel.

I have spent most of my ministry years as an MFIC Sister working in schools and parishes in Australia (except for two years in Papua New Guinea). Recently I was reflecting on the many ways God has allowed my life to touch the people who originally called me to a life of obedience, poverty and celibacy in the first place, i.e. those people we call marginalised, poor, despairing, oppressed, vulnerable, suffering..... Those people who tugged at my heart until I took the step of becoming a Franciscan sister.

In this last forty-five years, where has my life touched theirs in this affluent “First World” country of Australia? Yes, I did minister in our Franciscan foreign mission of Papua New Guinea for two years, and this was a classic experience of reaching out to the needy in a different culture for which I am very grateful. But where are the “Home Frontiers” of the Gospel that I found in Australia? One frontier has been with the refugees, in many practical ways (e.g. in arranging accommodation, medical coverage etc.) My life has touched a Bosnian, a Vietnamese and a Sudanese family, all settled by our parish and school. Nearly 200 Sudanese families were involved with me in Sacramental Preparation (over a three and a half year period). The faith, love, patience and beauty of these families in the face of their hardships, have been an inspiration to me.



Perhaps people wonder why (since 1971) I have continued with a small prayer group that gathers weekly to pray, host charismatic prayer in the city cathedral monthly, and host overseas speakers to conduct retreats, training sessions, healing rallies, and inner-healing prayer gatherings. For me it's simple - this prayer group has for the last forty years put me immediately in touch with many people undergoing various types of crises (illness, family death, exile, emotional, spiritual and financial crises), and who turn to God for help through prayer. It also puts me in touch with the God who *can* touch and heal and help them. In this situation, I am very much a facilitator, while God does the ministry. For me, this is a mission field for the Gospel.

Another mission field in our affluent society where I've facilitated the distribution of gifts that are not mine, has been my fifteen year association with the “Ecumenical Pantry” in Brisbane. Many people I met here were willing to walk literally kilometers to receive 10 items of food and a ten dollar Woolworths voucher. That really is poverty. All I had to give was a warm heart and a hospitable welcome to go with the meager gifts, but the stream of people kept coming.

When I had the chance to visit homes with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, in the same affluent parish where I had been a schoolteacher, I was astounded to find little backyard and hidden undercroft “flats”, which housed whole families. ...little did I guess these dwellings even existed in our beautiful neighbourhood until then.

Another ministry that touched my heart deeply (for three and a half years) was volunteering with the “Rosies” street van which takes soup, tea ,coffee and friendship to those who call the street their home. Here I met young people (our youngest client was nine years old) and teenagers who already were showing their brokenness and “lostness” at such a young age. Only on my visits to Sr. Cecilia in Woorabinda had I seen such childhood degradation. These visits, (the longest was one month) exposed me to an ancient culture in deep crisis and some of the most visibly obvious human needs, especially among the children there.

Yes, being an MFIC Sister in an affluent “First World” country does not cut you off from touching the needy and listening to them or attempting to meet some of their needs. I’m grateful to my Franciscan sisters for accepting me and enabling me to reach out and be with so many of God’s people in so many different situations over this forty-five years while I’ve worked as a teacher and parish pastoral associate in this “Lucky Country.”



And *surprise!* Now that I am older, and have been gradually moving out of some ministries, I find I can still *be* with people without always having to be the *doer*. People still appreciate “*being*” and “*presence*”. ...a ministry of being beckons; a ministry of presenceYes, a Franciscan Sister in an affluent “First World” country like Australia can always find a place somewhere with God’s suffering people.

Sr.Christina Zammit

Mt Alvernia Building Project

The Queensland State Government has brought down legislation requiring Year 7 students who are presently in our Primary School System to move into High Schools in January 2015, the beginning of our school year. This move will necessitate providing class rooms and other facilities like Science and Home Economics to be built. The expected intake of year 7 will be 175 students. This means that there will be 6 year levels of students in the school with approximately 175 students in each year level. The student population will grow to over 1000 and will be capped at 1050.

The school has developed a 50 year Building Plan Initially the present administration building, which is one of the original single level buildings, will be demolished opening up the entrance to the school.

A four level building will be built for the year 7 and 8 students parallel to the St Anthony's school playground. The newest building, St Anthony Middle School, will be refurbished and administration and science rooms will be built onto this existing building.

Mt Alvernia continues to be a very popular school in the community. There is a waiting list for entrance into most year levels and in particular year 8. The teachers and staff are

committed to Franciscan Values and this is evident in the pastoral care that is so sought after by parents and guardians.



Sr. Pauline Robinson

Community Retreat

*"When April with his showers sweet with fruit
The drought of March has pierced unto the root
Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
To distant shrines well known ..."*

Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales (Translated)



Towards evening on 30th April cars arrived one after the other to St Therese Spirituality Centre at Ormiston, down on the coast, bringing our sisters for Retreat. Some Sisters had come from a distance, driving for two days, others came from the South Coast to join all those who lived around the greater Brisbane area. As the cars rolled in I thought of the word 'pilgrimage'

which defines both an outer journey to a spiritual place and an inward journey to deeper spiritual enrichment. And so it was.

The place itself overlooking the glistening waters of ever changing blues in the quiet bay, the birdsongs, the many butterflies and the sweeping lawns under the shady trees all called us to “be still ...”

In this year of the Centenary of the foundation of the Poor Clares, Fr Tom Hartle ofm led us through a study of the panels framing Clare on the Tavola. Created soon after her death under the guidance of the Sisters who had lived with her from the beginning, these panels depict some defining moments in the life of Clare.

The artist incorporated symbolism that gave deep meaning to the story starting with that Palm Sunday night when Clare left home to join Francis. But what emerged for us was a young girl who had heard a clear call and who had the courage and determination needed to create something radically new in the religious life of women. Clare stepped out of those pictures and challenged us to own our own call, to review the graced moments that have been part of our personal journey and to face the ongoing challenges of creating something new today in the wake of the changes of Vatican Council II.



We celebrated Palm Sunday there by the sea remembering that it was on Palm Sunday night that Francis accepted Clare as an equal, recognising in her one who could bring completion to his ideal. On that night they embarked together on the journey determined to create a radically different lifestyle – and haven’t we been called to do something similar ourselves?

The Tavola illustrations show that it was not an easy road for Clare: she was the first woman to write a rule for religious women and she had to overcome great opposition to her ideal of poverty. She was determined to live the Gospel and derived meaning, purpose and clear direction from the love of the crucified Jesus. She wanted to witness to God’s love in the world and therefore her enclosure was not one that confined her to the cloister but was rather an enclosure of the heart, a sacred space to commune with the Beloved and to achieve that intimacy with Jesus which transformed and sustained her.

We are entrusted with the Franciscan charism today. We are apostolic religious but an integral aspect of Franciscan charism is contemplation.

Clare challenged us to live in such a way that we give clear witness to the Gospel in our world: **to be who we say we are**. What makes sense of it is our relationship with Christ: being willing to let go all to be with Him – to ‘*gaze upon Him, consider Him, imitate Him*’ – to enflesh in ourselves the love of Jesus – and in our world, where violence is commonplace and war, poverty and injustice are widespread, to witness as Jesus did, and as Clare did, to love and to peace, making the love of God visible and felt through gentleness in deeds and gestures of listening, touching and inclusivity.



Sr.M.Rose Wooden

The retreat spanned Holy week and Mass was celebrated each day in the beautiful chapel overlooking the bay. Opportunity for reconciliation was provided during a special liturgy.

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel invited to quiet and reflection in a space apart and on the last day of the retreat we were all anointed.

I would like to conclude by sharing with you some thoughtful reflections on the retreat by individual sisters:

We were invited as we moved through a study of the Tavola to create our own Tavola of events in pictures – what a grace to revisit the call of Jesus to me in so many ways over the years!

With the Tavola of St Clare we followed her journey, each recognizing her own mile-posts of commitment and abandonment to the love of Jesus

I came with doubts but I am going home confirmed, graced and challenged to continue to witness to Gospel values just as authentically as in my more youthful ministry days - maybe even in a deeper way. Love changes everything!

I can only describe the retreat as a Blessing – a blessing of Franciscan life and love given from God through pondering the experiences of Clare and Francis, to find where God has moved and touched me in my own life.

I loved the way Fr Tom brought out Clare from the icon-looking so called sophistry of the Middle Ages portrayed in images of that time, and transformed her into a loving, caring person, loving and beloved of God, with whom I can identify.



Fr. Tom with Sr. Cecilia Norris "Peace!"

Fr Tom took what was depicted in art, added a sprinkling of what was not – and behold a whole new understanding and way of life. Listen - Hear – Respond!

Each day this retreat has been filled with blessings- nourished in prayer and Eucharist as well as input with new challenges and new life – pure gift and food for the journey.

All agreed:

It was good for us to be here!

Sr.Noela Leamy

Elizabeth Hayes' Corner

What do you know about Elizabeth Hayes' *Annals*?

For a Victorian woman to succeed in journalism was impressive; Elizabeth Hayes capably led an international journal of religious ideas to stability and longevity. 19th Century periodical literature, recognised today as a distinctive and significant feature of Victorian public communication, is voluminous. In order to understand that the editor-publisher Elizabeth Hayes made a significant contribution to evangelising journalism, it is imperative to situate her work within the enormous outpourings of the Victorian periodical press.

Elizabeth, foundress of an organisation which edited, published and distributed a Franciscan monthly journal - scarcely investigated until Sr Francine (Pauline) Shaw's PhD thesis completed in 2006 - was prepared during her life prior to 1872 for her subsequent journalistic mission. The fact that Elizabeth made a significant contribution to 19th Century Catholic journalism is very clear when evidence of the immense power of the press for good and evil is provided. This was accomplished through an examination of both secular and religious periodical literature and in particular by situating Elizabeth's output within this milieu

The fact is further confirmed through a detailed examination of Elizabeth's *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels*, of the numerous contributions to her journal



and of the editing, publishing and distribution methods which she employed in her mission.

Elizabeth's publication is a significant contribution in the literary field to today's growing body of research on late 19th century professional women who enriched society with religious periodicals. From 1874's volume one, page one, Elizabeth presented the progress and development of the Franciscan Order and provided matter of interest to general readers. Her journal's range of themes adds weight to the growing body of evidence of how women's topics varied in the Victorian religious periodical press. Elizabeth's diffusion of good literature was an authentic medium of evangelisation over 21 years in her life time, and it was continued by her sisters for another 79 years after her death. As writer, editor, publisher, manager of printing and distribution, Elizabeth Hayes was a significant contributor to the Apostolate of the Press and she used her *Annals* as a tool of both adult education and entertainment.

Sr. Francine (Pauline) Shaw



*Pauline receiving her
award from the QLD.
Governor,
Ms. Penelope Wensley.*

Congratulations to Sr. Pauline!

"Sr Pauline Robinson has made an outstanding contribution to Catholic education, selflessly serving Catholic schools, parishes and the wider community at both the local and national level.

Pauline is the congregational leader of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters and a former member of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. She has initiated numerous projects, including the formation of Franciscan Schools Australia. She is the leader of its governing body and works tirelessly to ensure the latest news, resources and events are available to Franciscan schools across Australia.

Pauline was also involved in the development and implementation of a new structure for the P&F at Mt Alvernia College. The Parents and Friends Support Network is aimed at encouraging, improving and maintaining parent involvement and support in the College.

As a follower of St Francis, Sr Pauline shares the intimacy of her relationship with God in exceptionally life-giving ways and gives of herself so that others may know God."

Mrs. Alison Stone, Mt. Alvernia ,
who nominated Pauline for this award.