



Australian Circle Newsletter

Missionary
Franciscan
Sisters

Welcome from Pauline



Dear Sisters and friends,
Yet another year is coming to an end!
The happenings and celebrations are too numerous to be able to write an account to do justice to them all. There has been a lot of movement of Sisters in these last three months. We have had houses closing and new beginnings happening for a number of

Sisters. Once again we have the pleasure in sharing what is happening in our lives and our ministries. Wishing each of you every blessing of the Christmas Season!

Sr. Pauline Robinson

In this Edition

[Pauline's welcome](#)

["Atta Girl!..."](#)

[My Life at St. Peter's](#)

[Armchair Dreaming](#)

[Sangre de Cristo 100](#)

[EH Corner](#)

Atta Girl!

Having been asked to write about my ministry I have to think- Past? Present? Future?

Past – easily dealt with.

Present- nothing I can be charged with; have only been in Kedron three weeks.

Future- up to whatever one can do in one's nineties!!



Prayer?? So we go back to the past fifteen years when Sr. Catherine Dower and I were both appointed to what was then a little fishing village, pop. 500. Today it boasts 5,000 with future (Developers'!) dreams bringing it to 27,000. That village was Pottsville, New South Wales, and Sr Catherine and I arrived there in 1997.

We set ourselves to visitation. Catherine, as a driver, went to the more distant streets. As a non-driver, I walked all the nearby roads introducing myself, slipping notes into letter boxes for absentees, etc. Both of us were met everywhere with warmth and enthusiasm. "I can't believe I've got a nun having tea with me in my house." That was often said. (If they mentioned eating biscuits, naturally, this wouldn't have been written!)

Once our phone rang – "could we come to Marie and her children?" They had just heard their father had been drowned while fishing. It was 10pm. Catherine took the children into a bedroom remaining with them. I was with Marie until neighbours came. At 12.00 am our PP arrived. Another time our PP asked us to go with him to a lady's house. It was late at night and she had just received word of her son's death. Again we stayed with her while Father made all the necessary phone calls for her to relatives, etc. This continued for two years when Catherine retired through illness and Sr. Carmel Beirne replaced her. I continued my walking and visiting to shut-ins, elderly, and anyone else at home, bringing Holy Communion to those who requested it, and ashes on Ash Wednesday. As time went on I graduated to an electric scooter. Wonderful! Soon I was racing around Pottsville at a furious 10 Kms an hour! More wonderful when I discovered the scooter to be a great conversation maker. Even those I didn't know stopped me to examine the machine and ask questions. The braver ones called out various remarks like, "Atta girl!"; "Go it girl; "Police are after you!" or just, "Cool aa?" I think it was all brought on by the beautiful Akubra-like hat I wore!! Anyway, I always had lots of fun and great repartee developed between passersby and myself. My time still included Communion visits and "S.O.S's" to various trouble spots. I



I always visited parishioners in hospital and Aged Care Homes. Met once a month with women in a "Friendship" group to identify needy cases in our area. Friday mornings were spent with a group of non-denominational "Oldies" for a cup of tea (scrumptious eats) and a chat. Together with a couple of parishioners I brought weekly Communion to people in the beautiful newly built "Home for Aged Care" in our village. The scooter enabled me to

pop up at various other times too so that I could linger on and chat knowing there was no driver waiting for me. Then, my companion Sr. Carmel, died after a short illness, and I was called to headquarters, Kedron, Queensland - and thus ended my mission of the past fifteen years (and after 34 yrs. in PNG)

The future - ? If I keep going they'll probably have to shoot me ! **Sr.M.Quentin Kirwan.**

Quentin is famous for her quick repartee. If you haven't read her book "The Ride of My Life" about her experiences in PNG I dare you to do so and keep a straight face! Editor.

My Life at St Peter's.

Three years ago when I accepted the position of School Pastoral Worker at St Peter's Primary School in Caboolture I wasn't sure what the position would ask of me, or whether I could return to a school setting after many years in adult formation. I feel that my role is very simple: support for the students, parents, and staff. In a busy world and within the demands of family life children carry many stresses in their young lives. I am the one person in a very busy school of 640 students who can be available at short notice to be present to those who need a listening ear or support in a difficult situation. My role is to listen, to emphasise and to help them find strategies within themselves to meet these challenges. I often ask the Sisters to pray for particular needs and parents in particular are always so grateful to feel the power of that support.

When I arrive at work at about 8.00am and call into the staff room, and I do a circuit of the student gathering places and staffroom. If there are tears or tantrums I am nearby. At times I chat with a few parents. After classes start I begin my office work. Invariably the phone will ring or a child or a parent, or sometimes a staff member, appear at the door and want a word. Teachers ring through the day asking me to see children for a variety of reasons. When there are no immediate needs I have a number of children I support on a regular basis. My skills from Spiritual Direction training: journaling, art therapy, and relaxation, enhance my ministry at St Peters. My experience as Diocesan Director of Liturgy came in very handy when I needed to perform a funeral for a deceased turtle and help the preps to find forgiveness for Yabbie!

Most lunch times I spend in the playground. I have a few garden projects that the children love to share. I only need to pick up a hose or carry a trowel and immediately I have an entourage. As we water or weed I hear lots of stories and get lots of hugs. At times we grow lettuce, carrots, and tomatoes and when the time for harvest comes dozens of children materialize to get a carrot still coated in dirt, or even a few Cos lettuce leaves. Our parsley mysteriously remains a big hit and parents tell me that the children now eat it at home.

I work closely with the Guidance Counsellor and Inclusive Education Staff. We offer enrichment programs that enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of the students: Exploring Feelings, Anger Management; Bully Bulldozer, and more recently Drumbeat. This year I trained in Sand-tray and use it with a few students. I have recently co-facilitated my first Drumbeat program. It uses simple rhythms on the African Djembe drum to build confidence and resilience.

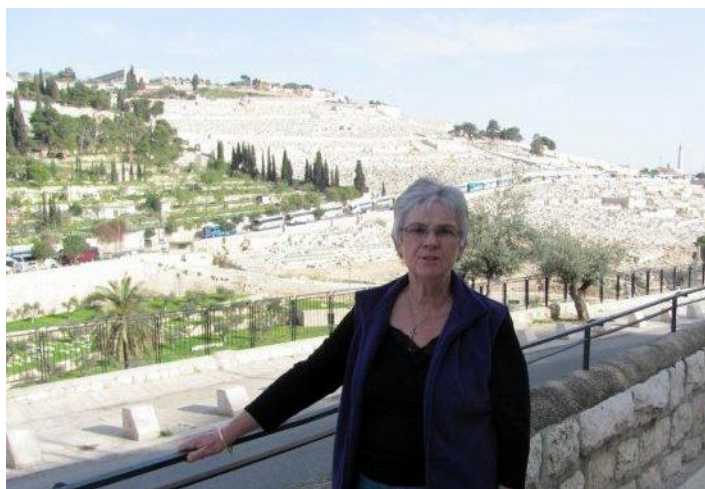
Recently my sister came to help me with TA DA, the annual three enrichment sessions. Teachers nominate an activity they can provide, and the students sign up. I offered cooking and had 3 grade seven boys, 3 grade seven girls, and a boy and a girl from grade three. We spent three afternoons on the veranda of the student support offices cooking together in a makeshift kitchen.

In the early morning and after school I relax with my German Shepherd Fanta. She teaches me that to live is a blessing. I feel very blessed to have found a place in a flourishing school surrounded by wonderful people who are glad to have me nearby. **Sr.Catherine White and Fanta!**



Armchair Dreaming - Remembering Jerusalem.

I sit in the old battered armchair in my lounge room and close my eyes. Once more I am back in the old walled city of Jerusalem. It is 6.00am and I glance from my bedroom window at the minaret on the Temple Mount and the dome of Ecce Homo Basilica before rushing down three floors of stairs to the concierge at reception.



Leaving the key to my room behind I step out into Via Dolorosa and walk down the cobblestone street to the corner where soldiers slump against the wall with AK47 guns on their shoulders. As I turn right and walk to the Damascus Gate I pass by noisy, excited Arab children on their way to school, Jews walking quickly to the Western Wall reading their prayers and avoiding all eye

contact, the old Arab beggar who may give me a shove and the Palestinian women dressed in the embroidered robes selling herbs. Living here for some months I start to know the people I pass by on this invigorating early morning walk.

Walking quickly along the street I step out of the Damascus Gate and look at the city walls from the other side whilst I climb the hill to re-enter by Jaffa Gate. The traders are now preparing to open their stalls and as usual quite eager to entice me in to “just inspect their wares”. Not likely!! They don’t know the meaning of “no”. I love these walls and touch them to feel their story channelling through my veins. The walls I have difficulty with are the ones that continue to be built around the Jewish settlements to ensure that the Palestinians are kept out. Another harassment for the people of this occupied territory.

On the return home I pass by the small tractors (the streets of the old city are too narrow for cars) carting away yesterday’s rubbish as the drivers twist and turn around the crooked streets with steps in the most unexpected places. I think about the day’s classes. We study the Old and New Testament as well as aspects of Jewish history and its application today – just to name a few. Each Wednesday we visit some special place or archaeological dig as we begin to breathe in the secrets of this land. I realise now how true it is that one does not really understand the Gospel until they see Jesus as a Jew and visit his land.

During the time I spent in Jerusalem I was privileged to make friends with a Jewish person who was my lecturer and a Muslim woman who worked in the office. My life was enriched by them and helped me to understand my own mission in a much deeper way.

I continue to dream that perhaps it could be possible to live peacefully in one of the towns of Israel as a religious presence. If there are any sisters dreaming of a sabbatical a whole

new world awaits you if you are ready to go. **Sr.Maureen Andrews**

SANGRE DE CRISTO 100: WATER IN THE DESERT

From 30 January to 8 May 2012, I participated in the 100th and final Sangre de Cristo sabbatical session in New Mexico. The re-focusing theme chosen by our group of twenty participants (eleven sisters, five brothers and four priests) just prior to the end of the programme was “*Sangre de Cristo 100: Water in the Desert.*” The physical changes we witnessed in the Sangre desert landscape over the 100 days - snow-covered mountains and iced-over waterfalls giving way to bright colourful desert flowers and gushing streams - reflected for us the experience of our inner transformation, refreshment and healing. Key to our sabbatical renewal were our sacrosanct weekly desert days and the retreat carefully inserted as the pivotal point of a labyrinth journey to the centre and then out to embrace the world and creation.

Sangre de Cristo Center is situated on a 600 acre property adjacent to the Santa Fe National Forest in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range at an altitude of 7000 feet. Despite my first startling impression of the surrounding desert-like countryside, I came to discover the fascinating beauty and variety of the desert and found it to be the perfect spot for a sabbatical. Not long into the program, I realized I was on mental overload and came to appreciate the value of leisure and recreation in developing a healthier and more contemplative lifestyle. I moved out of my normal comfort zone and beyond my fear of heights to take advantage of the wonderful hiking trails outside our back door – this was perhaps the single most life-changing choice I made during this time. I also proved to myself that weaving is a possible creative pursuit for the future, enjoyed outings and

opportunities for massage and a hot spa, and immersed myself in the wealth of art and culture for which the surrounding area of Santa Fe is well known. Forming community was an important aspect of the program and involved participating in household chores as well as community prayer experiences. I enjoyed the opportunity for re-entry into community living where all were peers, and being free to be myself as a person rather than being defined and perceived in terms of role. I am happy that amongst my new friends from Sangre are



two Australian sisters whom I have some hope of meeting again in the future. The Sangre experience is one which will remain in my awareness and for which I am most grateful .

Sr.Elaine Morzone.

E.H. Corner:

Recently another book review of *Elizabeth Hayes: Pioneer Franciscan Journalist* was published in the *Newman Studies Journal*. The reviewer, Sr. Marie Colette Roy a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 'found the story of Elizabeth Hayes a fascinating read.' Here is most of what she wrote.

Elizabeth Hayes (1823-1894), the youngest child of English parents, became a Franciscan sister and led an international journal of religious ideas. Through her *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels*, she was professional woman who contributed to society as an editor-publisher of a religious periodical. This book by Pauline Shaw (Sr M. Francine), which originated from a doctoral dissertation, is intended primarily for an audience interested in the unusual accomplishments of women, nineteenth-century history, Franciscanism, journalistic literature, or Catholic evangelism in North America.

The author's expertise is evident from the breadth of her research, the significant illustrations, chapter footnotes, six appendices, and extensive bibliography. The volume is a fine example of feminist history. Elizabeth Hayes had the self-confidence to consider herself an equal when dealing with leading male figures of her time. Her missionary and literary endeavors were remarkable. She was the first Franciscan woman to edit and publish a successful Catholic journal and the first publisher of a Franciscan journal in the English language.

Elizabeth's life journey was convoluted. Born the daughter of an Anglican clergyman on the Channel Island of Guernsey, she developed an early love of reading. She followed the controversies between Roman Catholics and the members of the Oxford movement. She was an educator, Anglican sister who converted, and joined Rosminian sisters who later moved to observing the Franciscan Rule on Dr. Henry Manning's advice. Subsequently she lived with the Glasgow Franciscan community in 1858 and retained the religious name Sr Mary Ignatius. Elizabeth wanted to be a foreign missionary, went to Jamaica, and after four years there, returned to England seeking stability, authorization of minister, and a new missionary goal.

Elizabeth spent two years in Rome, researching and writing, to insure that she had intact the Rule of the Third Order and Constitutions in accordance with it. Following the disbandment of her community in Sevres during the Franco-Prussian War (1870) she ministered in Germany, then went to the United States, where she founded her missionary sisterhood at Belle Prairie, Minnesota in 1872. At this time she resolved to proceed with plans to move into periodical publishing. Newly literate classes of people in the mid-nineteenth century found periodicals their primary source of entertainment, instruction, and information. However, journalism was not recognized as a mainstream ministry for religious women. She subsequently established the central house of her congregation, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, in Rome. Elizabeth Hayes would want to be remembered more as a Franciscan than as an educator, missionary or journalist. Yet her understanding of and commitment to sharing the history of the Franciscan Order, news of its missions, traditional devotions, and its holy men and women enabled her to make a significant growth in the numbers of lay people who were becoming Franciscan tertiaries or strengthening their life as Franciscans.

Recurring central motifs can be identified in her life and writings, as facilitating the reign of God, evangelization, service to the poor, and outreach to those who had not heard the salvific Christian message.

Ref. *NEWMAN STUDIES JOURNAL* Vol. 9, Issue 1, Spring 2012. Pp. 98-9. **Sr. M. Francine (Pauline) Shaw.**