

Australian Circle Newsletter

Missionary
Franciscan
Sisters

Welcome from Pauline



Dear Sisters and Friends,

Once again we have had a very interesting time since the last newsletter. In 2012 we decided that we would do something for each of three age groups of Sisters. The younger group gathered together at Mt Archer. Some of the sisters will tell you about that gathering. Sisters continue to reach out to needs as they arise. This edition features articles about three "retired" sisters who have responded to some present ministry needs. They will tell

their own story. It is good see Sisters reaching out to others....it is in giving that we receive. Happy reading!

Sr. Pauline Robinson, Australian leader.

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Mt.Archer Gathering

Input at the Mt. Archer Gathering of "youngest age group of sisters" – April 5th to 7th covered:

Our Cosmic Reality: The Journey of the Universe ...All-Is-One!

The Dream of the Earth: Awakening the Dreamer

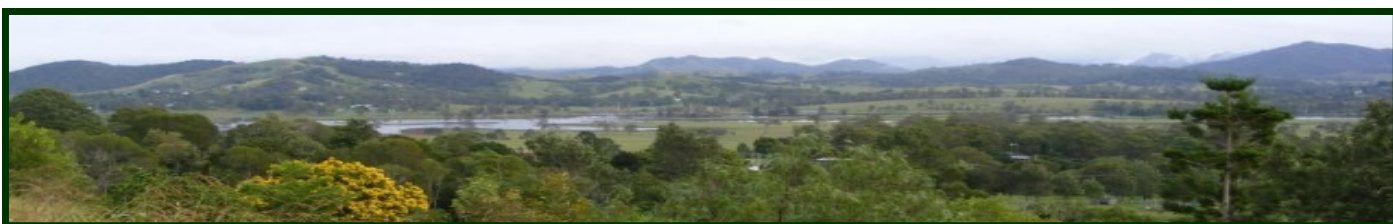
Ancestral Grace: Meeting God in Our Human Story

Who Do You Say I am: The Viable Christian.

During our three days at The Archer, we journeyed through the above themes using creative exercises, DVD input, time for mediation and reflection, singing, reading and sharing together and time to relax. These sessions were ably led by Sr. Elaine Smith and Bro. Tony Hempenstall.

"The Archer" was a very pleasant place to be with its natural beauty. It was great to all hear and experience the same input and have time to share in pairs and in the whole group. Cosmology and the Story of the Universe has become a shared reality. This is the beginning of a great adventure into a new spirituality together. These days of reflecting together at "The Archer" has given me new energy to be a COSMIC dreamer!

Sr. Pauline Robinson





My sense of wonder and awe and the feeling of the sacredness of the universe deepened as we relaxed in the beautiful natural surroundings and became steeped in the new cosmology presented to us by Tony and Elaine. It was wonderful to have time to catch up with each other and have the opportunity to share our reflections. It was good to come apart from our busy world and stop to observe creation all around us - the wallabies foraging in the long grass; the friendly, lonely young bull in the paddock next door, and the many birds flitting through the garden. The only unwelcome creatures were the baby ticks... Some of us had a few unwanted souvenirs to take home with us!

Sr. Cecilia Prest

I am very aware of how "lucky" (as we Aussies say) we are to have been given this experience of gathering, connecting and relating with our sisters at Mt. Archer, while at the same time further exploring our deep connection with the cosmos, and the Cosmic Christ. One day, I am going to paint a picture of this Cosmic Christ, with His arms embracing us, and embracing Brother Sun, Sister Moon, sister Mother Earth, Brother Wind and Fire and Brother Wolf etc., all of whom are part of us in some way, and to whom we are connected. Thank you for a very inspiring weekend away, which enhanced my sense of belongingness in more ways than one.

Sr. Christina Zammit



I have always been a star-gazer - most nights I watch the Southern Cross come up over the clothes line! However, since Mt. Archer I no longer gaze but "hug the stars as they ignite and fill the darkness with their light."

Sr. Elizabeth

Roberts

I experienced the time at Mt. Archer as a wonderful time of re-awakening to the mystery of universe which is also the mystery of who I am and who I am becoming. The variety and beauty of the surrounding landscape and the experience of the animal world at our doorstep was a delight, so energizing and liberating. My initial reaction on seeing boxes of crayons on the floor as I first entered "The Potter's Room", our normal place of gathering, was one of "Oh, No! I could do without that!" However, despite my limitations when it comes to expressing myself artistically, I was happily surprised by the way they opened me to new insights which were moments of grace for me. Through our sharing and being together in a place we revered as sacred, the bond of communion among us as sisters was deepened and our circle of communion was expanded to include our non-human universe "brothers and sisters". Thanks to all who made such a great weekend possible. I hope to



'My time at the Archer was very blest. It was a mini renewal a year on from the three month course on cosmology and spirituality I did at Glenburn in Victoria. I loved the input and the reverence for the 'Sacred Earth'. It was also a great experience being with all the sisters who together in this community have travelled the path of Religious Life for around half a century. I kept thinking back to the early days when we were all young and equating it to now when all are still living the life with love - older and perhaps not as energetic - but nevertheless very involved to the extent each can be. Is there something like seven hundred years of ministry between us? It was a witness to me of dedication and the work of the Spirit that dwells in each of us. Thank you to each of you for being there and for being such an inspiration for me.'

Sr. Margaret Costello

'All the great mystics, including Francis, understood the connectedness and inter-relational life of everything in the universe. Ilia Delio is a Franciscan profit in our times; one way forward into a richer understanding of our Creator God/Cosmic Christ can be achieved through reflective reading.'

Sr. Francine Shaw

'What a blessing to gather with my Sisters to remember and give thanks for the story of the universe so creatively narrated, sung and danced. My inner landscape calmed and rested in the peaceful beauty of the landscape of Mt Archer and the surrounding countryside.'

Sr. Catherine White

A successful Open Day at Delamore Retirement Community



Delamore Retirement Community at Kedron in Brisbane is owned and operated by the MFIC Sisters. As it moves towards 25 years of age, we decided it was time to do complete makeovers of units and serviced apartments as they became vacant. While our Business Manager Bernadette Turton oversaw the internal renovations, it became clear that our grounds were in need of some loving attention. After many wet weeks over the past few years the gardens were not looking their best. With the annual Open

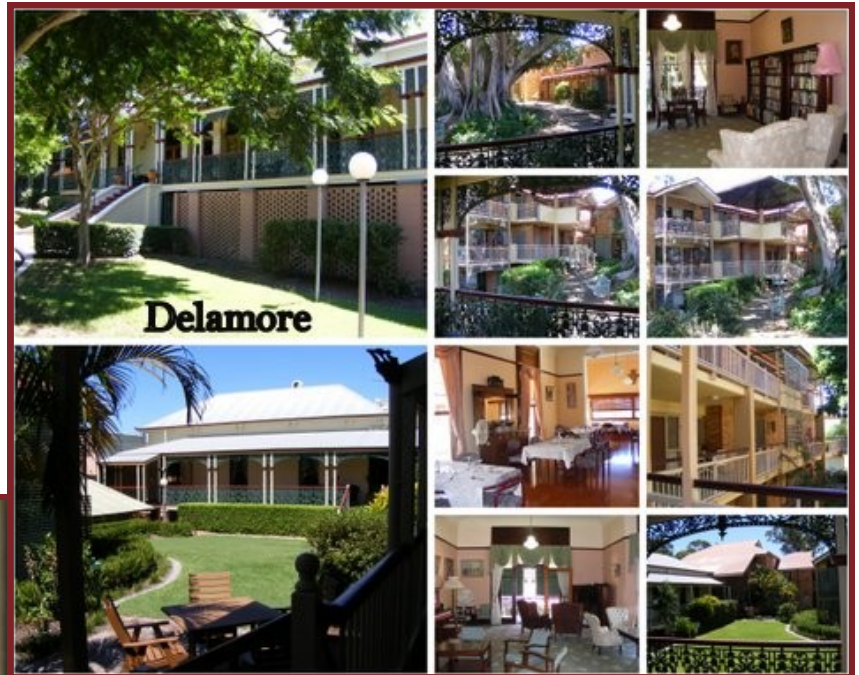
Day approaching, a rapid action response was needed. Sr Pauline, our Australian Leader, invited staff and parents from our neighbours at Mt Alvernia College and St Anthony's Primary School to join us for a half-day working bee. Our new Delamore Manager and the Groundsman and ten Sisters were joined by 30 friends who arrived with forks, spades, wheelbarrows and hedgers for the beautification project. The staff and some of the more energetic sisters arrived before 7.00am to organise the project which began at 9.30 am.



Many cubic meters of woodchip were moved from strategically placed piles to newly planted or weeded gardens. A number of hedgers neaten up the many shrubs around the front of the complex, while mulchers turned the prunings into usable compost for future projects. Many dozen plants were planted. The project came to its conclusion with a wonderful BBQ lunch in the convent courtyard.

With some of the vacant units and serviced apartments newly renovated and the gardens looking beautiful, the Open Day was blessed with fine weather and a steady stream of visitors. Members of Delamore staff and Board members escorted the visitors through the complex, answering queries and pointing out some of the features it offers. The praise of the refurbishments was unanimous and we even made a couple of sales on the day. Every person who visited loved the lovely old home, the beautiful views and gardens as well as the units.

Having done a tour, or waiting for an



available tour guide, our guests were offered a delicious Devonshire Tea on the front veranda of the historic Delamore House. It was wonderful to see the staff and students of Mt Alvernia College hospitality unit waiting on the cafe tables set up along the wide veranda. We also offered a sausage sizzle to our visitors

and noted that some visitors found it difficult to leave the pleasant atmosphere of the day.

The Sisters are so grateful to all the wonderful friends and staff who came to help us prepare for and organise the Open Day. Delamore is a beautiful, gracious, historical home. She is much loved by the Sisters and residents of Delamore and it is clear she has many friends in the wider community. The Retirement Community enjoys the Franciscan atmosphere and presence.

Sr.Catherine White

“You can’t believe the work that has gone into the open day – words can’t quite cover it all.... It was a wonderful day altogether ... really blessed. The thing that pleased me was that individuals commented on the ‘feeling’ of the place – quiet, gentle, peace-filled – and as Christine Nyts (Delamore Manager) said, “That is something money can’t buy.” It’s also something advertisements can’t communicate. Some asked to see the chapel and loved it “

Sr.Noela Leamy

Retirement Ministry

Since retiring from classroom teaching in December 1992, I've been involved in part-time ministries. At this time the Lourdes Wing Infirmary existed and as a few of the Sisters needed extra care, this was a morning chore for me.



For two years I taught catechetics at the Kedron State School and for many years I was on the parish Communion round.

In the early days at Delamore I took Holy Communion once a week to the residents in his/her unit or apartment, as most of them were unable to go to church.

Setting up the Archives was a challenge, as initially all records were stored in two boxes! Now there are twenty plus and all packed to overflowing; not to mention the photo collection. To begin with, the archives were in the Provincial Office in the so called Madonna Wing where Sr. Laura worked as secretary, so space was very limited.

Computer skills were essential, so for weeks I attended the U3A lessons in the city until I was confident enough to do the setting up of the Archives.

When Hennessy Lane was bought, a room was available to store the Archives, so I spent many years working there.

At present the Archives are stored once again in their original place where easy access can be had. I spent many peaceful days working there and old photos were a big attraction.

I now have an interest in teaching reading, spelling and sounds to a little Sudanese girl, Aluat, in year One. Now aged 83, I occasionally visit a couple of parishioners and enjoy walking with a friend.

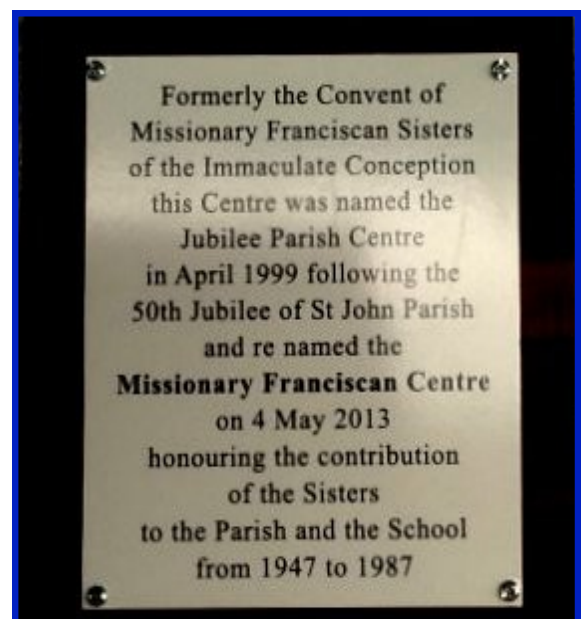
Sr. Paulette Golding

Silkwood Parish Centre Naming

For almost 40 years, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent was home to the Missionary Franciscan Sisters. (It was actually on the feast of the Immaculate Heart, 5th June, 1948 that the first sisters took up residence.)

Now, 63 years later it was being renamed "The Missionary Franciscan Centre" and dedicated as a place for the Parish to gather for prayer and other special events.

Sr. Pauline read a short passage from the early Chronicles, the President of the Three Saints' Committee, Mr. Fred Maccarone, spoke of the support given to the sisters, including the purchase of a car and I said a few words on our missionary work, including walking through the canefields on a Saturday with a packed lunch, visiting the migrant families who lived in barracks with few comforts and little or no English.





Several past pupils from the very early days were present, as well as those from more recent times. The final part of the ceremony was the proud unveiling of the Plaque by Pauline and myself.

After Mass, we finished off the evening with a delicious supper under a giant marquee in the school grounds, catching up with our past pupils and old friends - all sharing stories from the early days down to the present. Although we closed our Silkwood ministry 26 years ago, the sisters are still remembered with great love and affection - our Franciscan spirit lives on, very much alive and thriving.

Sr. Elizabeth Roberts .

..... And Bit of History About SILKWOOD

This convent, named the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was opened in 1948. Fr Larkin OSA, then at Innisfail, was instrumental in bring our Sisters to Silkwood. This was through Fr Cleary O.Carm who was giving retreats in the area. Our sisters were in the Coorparoo Parish. Fr Cleary mentioned that we were missionaries and would be likely to come north. The Catholic Population in 1947 was 1029, while the total population was 2000. The priest who looked after Silkwood was Fr Alfred M Natali OSA an Italian-American.

On December 10th, 1947, 3 sisters left by train from Roma Street Station, Brisbane for Silkwood. They were Sr M Jarlath McIntyre, Sr M Leo Dwyer and Sr M Padua Nolan. The train journey in those days lasted from Wednesday evening until Friday at 1.15pm when they arrived at Silkwood.

The only building completed on their arrival was the Church. The school, a former sausage factory was being renovated. There was no accommodation ready for the Sisters. The Sisters first evening was spent at the Good Samaritan Covent at Innisfail. They spent their vacation time at South Johnston convent, also offered by the Good Samaritan Sisters. They arrived there on 15th December. The sisters finally decided to live in the Presbytery, while Fr Natali, lived in the sacristy.

The Chronicles read: "Nothing in the house but one bed, one knife, one fork, one spoon, one bucket, two basins, Father's desk and a refrigerator. Primus out of order, so firewood supplied. Torrential down-pour of rain, grounds under water, grass in backyard two to three feet high" On January 12th two more sisters arrived, Sr M Clare Walker and Sr M Lucy Wooden. Now there were 5 in that tiny house.

School began on Feb 2nd, with an enrolment of 75. While the Sisters taught the builders continued their work beside them.

May 9th saw the official opening and blessing of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent and school. The two storied convent drew great praise .

On May 29th the Sisters were still living in the Presbytery when Fr Timbs CSSR came to give a fortnight's Mission in the Parish. He went to live in the new convent, remaining there until June 4th, feast of the Sacred Heart. The Sisters moved into the convent the following day amid cyclonic rain!! The convent was like heaven after the cramped quarters in the Presbytery.

In 1969 the Three Saints Committee gifted the Sisters with a car. The Sisters were then able to go farther afield to visit the homes of students and the sick at the end of each school day.

Twenty-nine Sisters have ministered in Silkwood. The last two being Sr Celine O'Donovan and Sr Crea Gallagher who left at the end of the 1991 school year.

The Missionary Franciscan Sisters served in Silkwood for a total of 40 years.

Sr. Pauline Robinson.

A Month in the Lord's Vineyard.

A hug from the friendly taxi driver (a "she" by the way) and we were on our way to Cunnamulla. It was 6.15pm on a night in April. Nine or ten bundles and bags, a scooter, a wheelie walker, two walking sticks, one nonagenarian and a young octogenarian; in other words, Sr .Francois and self – all lined up and ready for our seventeen hours long train journey.

Settled in our triple sleeper, all went well until the beds were pulled down. Francois started gamely up the ladder ... a problem; just couldn't make it from the ladder to the berth. Subsequent mirth from try-er and onlooker didn't help but an approaching staff member did. He went off to enquire about our proposal re an "empty" room next door, returning later to state solemnly, that "after consideration, it had been decided that on account of our rowdiness – disturbing the whole carriage- we would have to be separated," one going next door. So here we are, two separate sleeping berths!

Sr. Maureen Andrews who lives in Cunnamulla had driven the two hour journey into Charleville to meet us off the train. Francois, her scooter, wheelie walker and some of the luggage went the rest of the journey by the local bus. I went with Maureen by car.

Cunnamulla, a lovely little one street town, a wide street and garden and trees down the centre has a population of 1,548. Small as the place is it's a hive of activity. No resident priest but Fr. Peter comes once a month from Charleville for Mass here and then goes further on to Thargomindah, 201 Km. Maureen looks after the place in the absence of the priest and is certainly kept busy with calls coming from every direction.



They are typical country people who accepted us as family- very friendly, lovely people. One lady drove us to "Pamper Day" which was to be held at Wyandra, situated half way between Cunnamulla and Charleville. It's a little town of 30 people and a school with seven pupils. "Pamper Day" meant just that! Stalls were set up in a large hall-cum-church meeting place etc and they provided hand and toenail painting, a spa footbath followed by massage; facials, a Medicare stall for advice brochures and healthy recipes. Last but not least, a couple of nurses giving health advice - and then a Devonshire Morning tea plus many other goodies on the table. A sausage sizzle with side salads concluded a great day...and only 30 people living here! A few extras had come in from the various stations around. It had all been for free; not even donations being accepted. God bless our generous, thoughtful country people.

Back home, some ladies were interested in Mah Jong so four of us gathered for our first lesson. I found it surprisingly interesting. Hopefully it will be a weekly event.

Sr. Maureen went to Sydney for a week of conferences and she was kind enough to order "Meals on Wheels" for us in her absence... A digression. I was reminded of my early days in PNG when I electrified my poor parents by sending them a cartoon showing a missionary blissfully cycling along a jungle path while two salivating natives peered out from the jungle, "Meals on Wheels" one murmured.

"I want two of you to sell tickets in town" was how the conversation ran one day. "You can do the selling," sez I to Francois. We arrived in town, unloaded two chairs, a table, books of tickets, and sat down to wait. "Would you like to buy a ticket for a bee-u-ti-ful bed quilt for your mother/wife, etc to be raffled on Mothers' day?" we cooed. I really enjoyed those mornings "on the street" and every day a lady came along to us with a cup of coffee. We had a lovely excuse to stop people for a chat, and lots of humour.

Cunnamulla has a lovely hospital, spotlessly clean, small, and yet spacious. There were just two patients when we visited. We also visited "The Lodge," likewise spotlessly clean. It serves as a hostel/nursing home. One of the ladies from the parish, herself in a wheelchair, brings Holy Communion to a couple of people there every Monday. Francois helped her too during her stay.

Anzac Day! Men marched with medals proudly worn. A local pastor preached on peace and reconciliation. Wreaths were laid on the town memorial.

Another day of excitement when *eight hundred* bikies arrived in town. They were from all the capital cities in Australia and were riding for cancer, heading as far as Longreach, visiting and receiving donations. One man told us he would be out of pocket personally by \$3,000 by the time he arrived back home to Brisbane as he had taken the week off from work, giving up a wage, plus petrol and accommodation. Seemingly he wasn't the only one. Eight hundred bikies on the road for a week for charity, and not a mention in any newspaper.

The museum is another place of wonder. They have a marvellous display which includes a tunnel! Visitors go into the tunnel, which is named the "Artesian Time Tunnel," and are taken back in time a 100 million years ago to discover the Artesian Basin as it was then. Excellently done!

One day an Aboriginal lady was chatting to us and told us how her mother had written a book about her life. Married at sixteen she worked from then on with her husband as a drover, taking 6,000 sheep over the miles constantly, pregnant or ill most of the time. In her later years she decided to go into politics. Her daughters presented a copy of the book to the Pope when he visited Australia, and in a later edition there is a photograph showing the Pope paging through the book.

All in all, Cunnamulla is an intriguing place. I would have enjoyed it more twenty years ago but I still enjoyed learning and seeing what I did discover about the people and the place and realising that the "everywhere" God is here too in this parched, dry and isolated place just as much as He is in the big populated cities of this world.

Sr .M. Quentin Kirwan.

Another Companion in the Vineyard (Taken from Sr.Francois' first visit there last year)

It has been a full week in Cunnamulla . I am enjoying the country air and space but especially the friendly and welcoming people with whom I have come in contact. I love the presence of the emus with their young chicks, the lizards and turtles crossing the road so slowly, the roos hopping here and there.

I have started working on the census with Lorna, an arthritic lady who has spent all her married life here and knows most people. She is such a spiritual person and good to be with. On Monday afternoon I accompanied her to the Lodge where there are a dozen elderly patients and where she had a Eucharistic liturgy and rosary with a group. I have also had a bit of a social life doing some craft (art and tapestry) and having lunch on Sunday; a game of "Hoy" in the Lodge and a cuppa with another group; to Connie's where it is supposed to be "weight watchers" but in reality is another cuppa! ; to an art exhibition evening at the Centre where one artist had a room full of created pieces of mainly animals crafted from corrugated iron pieces; to an aged care centre to attend a birthday party of one of the ladies. All these activities have helped me to get to know so many wonderful people and to get the feel of life in their midst.

Maureen has a Eucharistic liturgy going each Saturday evening, Sunday morning and Tuesday and Wednesday. She is also busy with a group of children preparing them for the sacraments. People pop into the house to receive help from her and the days fly by. Taking Communion to the sick is always such a privilege and a real opportunity to grow in our own faith. I am able to give her a hand with everyday tasks like updating the baptismal register, watering the garden etc.



One aspect of life here is the chance I now have to interact with the aborigines. For the funeral on Wednesday the church was packed and for me this was such an enriching experience – beautiful people! One I have been able to get to know is Kevin, disabled from diabetes but keeping himself active in his motorised wheelchair, joining in with activities such as card games and enjoying life as well as he can.

I am grateful to God for the opportunity of sharing with Maureen in her ministry here in Cunnamulla.

Sr.M.Francois Wridgway

This time Francois was involved with the preparations for the upcoming 100 yrs. celebration in the town which meant typing up a lot of the history. She also had her scooter with her this time which enabled her to get around much more easily. Editor.

E.H.Corner....more snippets.

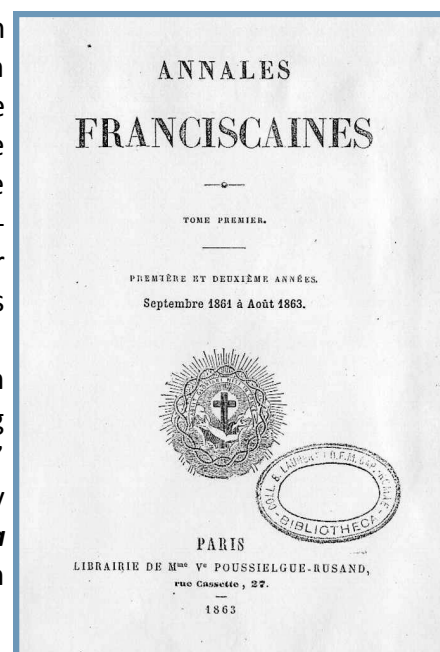
In her early *Annals'* publications Elizabeth's knowledge and use of the French 'Franciscan Annals', ***Annales Franciscaines***, was clear. Elizabeth's lifelong proficiency in French was invaluable for reading and translating this publication. When Elizabeth lived in Jamaica her French speaking Franciscan community read this Franciscan journal, *Annales Franciscaines*. At least seven of the community of nine Sisters, including Sr M. Ignatius, read French well. Easy access to this French Franciscan journal was likely, after Elizabeth's arrival

in France (to open a convent in 1864) which was interrupted by two years of work in Italy (Sept. 1864 to Aug. 1866), then again, the period until she left Sevres around July 1870 at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war.

A French journal of 1870 was called *Revue Franciscaine*, and Elizabeth quoted from it in 1874 when she retold the story of "The Franciscans in Prussia". It provided a telling insight – 'several of the Sisters were French but the greater number were of Polish origin', they were expelled 'for having published a collection of Hymns in honour of the Sacred Heart!' This being so, one can imagine the punishment for publishing a journal during the persecution of the Church in places under Prussian control. Elizabeth published numerous references to this journal. Elizabeth Hayes wrote:

'In Spain the Franciscan Fathers commenced a monthly publication January 1873; this is an evident proof that the Third Order is spreading there, notwithstanding that anarchy and revolution rends the country.' Elizabeth's words were confirmed by research done for us in Rome by Fr. Maurice Carmody. Elizabeth identified the publication of *La Revista Franciscana*, as proof of the development and spread of the Franciscan Order.

Sr.M.Francine Shaw



Fr.Maurice ofm

Footnotes:

Elizabeth Hayes, "The Franciscans of the Most Blessed Sacrament," *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels* I, no. 4 (1874): 104. Elizabeth Hayes, "Foreign Missions," *AOLA* I, no. iv (1874): 121.

Pauline J. Shaw mfc, *Companion to the Diary. Sister Mary Ignatius of Jesus (Elizabeth Hayes)* Brisbane: MFIC & Parish Youth Ministry Services., 1996, 5.

Revue Franciscaine: Bulletin mensuel du Tiers – Ordre de Saint Francois – Paris: Tolra et Haton, Editeurs, 1870 in Friars library, "Antonianum." Rome. No. 968.

Friars, "Literary Notices," 284. Elizabeth Hayes, "The Franciscans in Prussia" *AOLA* I, no. iii (1874): 94.

Elizabeth Hayes, "Foreign Missions," 121. Elizabeth Hayes, "The Franciscan Order," *AOLA* I, no. vii (1874): 224.

Elizabeth Hayes, "Another Glorious Tomb," *AOLA* I, no. vii (1874): 223. *Revue Franciscaine*, vol. XXIX, Bordeaux, 1899, in Michael Bihl, *Julian of Speyer*.

Elizabeth Hayes, "The Progress and Development of the Third Order in Europe," *AOLA* 1, no. i, 1874: 29.