



Australian Circle Newsletter

Missionary
Franciscan
Sisters

Welcome from Catherine



Christmas is the time when we focus on the coming of the one named the Prince of Peace. The image of Jesus on the cross with arms open wide and his body stretched between heaven and earth is a powerful reminder of what it means to be bearers of peace. In a world that is torn apart by hatreds and divisions, we open our arms to accept whoever comes into our embrace. When we embrace difference and sameness, we bridge the distance between heaven and earth.

Let us step aside from the Christmas of expensive gifts, tinsel and fairy lights to open

our hearts, our lives and our world to the Prince of Peace. Let us make it a time to connect with family, friend, and stranger - a time where the richest presents are the gift of our time, our attention and our love.

“From time to time, to remind ourselves to relax and be peaceful, we may wish to set aside some time for a retreat, a day of mindfulness, when we can walk slowly, smile, drink tea with a friend, enjoy being together as if we are the happiest people on Earth.”

— Thích Nhất Hạnh, Being Peace

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Sr. Catherine White

Aust. Chapter and the New Leadership Team

We rejoice in our new Leadership Team with Catherine White (Circle Leader), Patricia Treacy (Assistant Leader) and Elaine Morzone (Councillor). We thank them for their great generosity and support them with our prayers over their four year term of office.

The general feeling was that this Australian Circle Chapter was the best we have had to date. It was a Spirit led time with our excellent facilitator, Sr. Monica Cavanagh RSJ, who fitted in so well with our charism. There was plenty of time for prayer and reflection throughout our time in chapter. From the outset we wished to focus on our way of being with one another and to appreciate the gift of each sister. Our hopes were to find and focus on what inspires and motivates us rather than task related matters.

Congratulations Elaine, Patricia and Catherine !



We hoped to “go gently with light step” in a contemplative spirit to enable each sister to be herself, speak her truth and be heard.

We wished to see beauty in our fragility, like the broken pot in our logo , mended

with gold.

We hoped that this Chapter would be a unifying experience with Franciscan elements, especially those of joyfulness, hope and a contemplative stance.

We wished to redefine our mission and focus outwards.

And so the **Australian MFIC Mandate** is the product of these hopes:

“With a burning desire to cross new thresholds, we embrace our future, going forward with light step to fulfil God’s desire for us. We do this with the energy of the Spirit, faithful to our religious commitment in the “now” of our everyday encounters.

Celebrating giftedness within our wisdom and our fragility, we cultivate an attitude of peace building and non-violence. that informs our words, actions, and all our relationships.

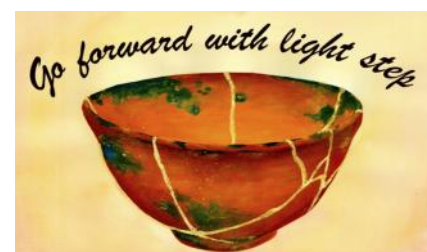
We commit ourselves to :

- expanding our spiritual consciousness through our embrace of cosmic spirituality.
- deepening our lived practice of the contemplative stance.
- simplifying both our lifestyles and governance structures.
- seeking ways to give voice to issues of justice, peace, the environment and climate change.
- practising inclusive hospitality, and supporting those who are poor and disadvantaged, in particular refugees and asylum seekers, women, and those who suffer.
- supporting Franciscan mission including MFIC initiatives in PNG, LA and S. Sudan and short term MFIC missions, Franciscan Schools Australia, and Franciscans International, Delamore, Mt Alvernia, and other Circle ministries.
- collaborating with others in mission, through active involvement, sponsorship, and/or financial commitment.”

A seemingly tall order, but as Catherine commented during the Chapter, “this mandate is what we wish to do. We can unpack the “how” during our subsequent meetings.”

During one of our reflection times Sr. Monica reminded us to “ ‘Feed my sheep. Follow me’ wherever you find yourself.”

We never stop being missionaries or being in ministry no matter how fragile we become –and look at all the spiritual wisdom and lived experience we have to share with the world!



Sr. Cecilia Prest

Jubilarians for 2014...

Congratulations ... Paulette, Francois, Liz ,Quentin & Ursula!



We celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Sisters Paulette, Ursula and Francois, and the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth and Quentin together with our Australian Circle feast day of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, on Sept.21st. with prayer in the Kedron chapel followed by a "sit down meal." Ursula is in high care in the Holy Spirit Nursing Home just "up the road" and was remembered in the celebrations and visited in the Home. We piled into cars and visited the two new houses in

Carseldine, the communities of Patricia Treacy and Sue Sullivan at Accolade Place , and Catherine White and Pauline Robinson at Binara Court, where the meal continued with desert and coffee!

Sr. Crea Gallagher arriving at Accolade Place with Srs. Cecilia Norris, and Joyce Fenton following.



Srs. Joyce and Ursula at the Holy Spirit Home.



Admiring Tricia's beautiful needlework

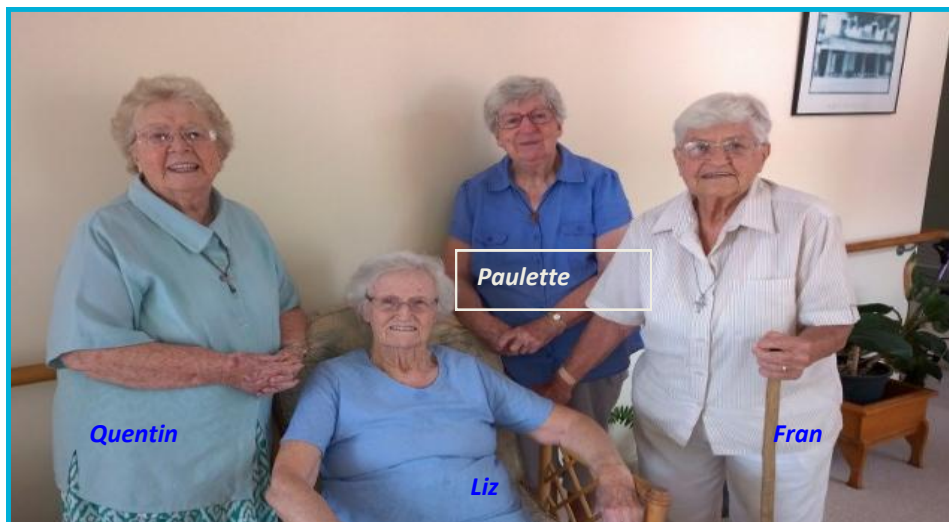


Relaxing at Binara Court after an enjoyable day togetherPaulette, Miriam, Cecilia, Quentin, Liz Prendergast & Cecilia Prest.



Paulette, Margaret Rubenach and Karen Bourke

Sr. M. Quentin Kirwan 70 Yrs.



Sr. M. Quentin was born in England of Irish parents. As a young girl she felt she had a missionary vocation and always wanted to work in the foreign missions. She entered with our Sisters in Ireland with this in mind and was sent to Australia in 1946 with two other Sisters. Imagine her disappointment to find the children she was to teach were not aborigines but white Australians.

In 1949 our Sisters went to PNG

to work with the Franciscan Friars in the Aitape Diocese. They worked mainly in the fields of health and education with a strong leaning towards helping the women. Our Sr. Quentin longed to join them but had to wait twelve years before she finally did so. She joyfully packed her bags and left the familiar surroundings of Brisbane to follow her call to the foreign missions at last.

In 1958, Quentin arrived over the mountains to Fatima, her first teaching position with our Sisters in PNG. For the next few years she spent time between Fatima in the mountains and Sissano on the coast, teaching children and visiting the villages which she loved doing.

During her years in Fatima she walked to Karate village each weekend to spend time with the people there, sharing stories and listening to theirs, patiently sitting by the fire each evening, giving of her time and of herself to these people week after week.

In 1969, Quentin was asked to be part of the Pastoral outreach that visited our Mission on the Sepik River. Faithfully every month Quentin would journey with the priest to spend time with the catechist, to help with instructions in the Faith, especially in the school. (A good account of this is included in her book, "The Ride of My Life" first published in March 2007)

At this time Quentin was living and working at St. Martin's Pastoral Centre in Aitape with Sr. Therese Magee, and was managing two separate apostolates. She did this with her usual gentleness and her sense of humour which was always so much a part of her and a source of strength in whatever she accepted.

While at St. Martin's, her companion Therese died suddenly at age 62. While Quentin waited quietly for her to arrive for Mass, Therese had a brain haemorrhage and passed away in their little house on the hill. What a shock for Quentin to have to experience!

Quentin left PNG in 1992 and returned to Australia. She continued her generous apostolate in such places as Rockhampton, Fitzroy Crossing, Pottsville, and now in Kedron. She continues to give of herself, her strength and her listening ear to those in need. Now that she has reached 90, the fact that she is still able to keep going can surely be attributed to the bush trips and long walks which she constantly carried out in PNG.

Sr. Noela Leamy

Quentin's fitness is also due to her discipline of daily exercise. She can be seen out the front drive walking with her wheelie walker every morning, rain, hail or shine! **Editor.**

Sr. Elizabeth Prendergast 70 Yrs.



Elizabeth Prendergast was born in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, Ireland. She came from a very Franciscan childhood. Although the Franciscans did not have a parish, they gave service in many areas and were often in the Prendergast home and great friends with the family.

Her elder sister Carolyn entered the mfics and Elizabeth was influenced by her contented life. At that time the Novitiate was in Rome but because it was during the second world war, Elizabeth entered the Bloomfield Juniorate in Ireland. She made her Novitiate in Bloomfield, Ireland and made first Profession there on 4th Oct., 1944, receiving the name of Sr Mary Leocadia but eventually changed to Elizabeth.

Carolyn was still in Rome. Liz simply wanted to be a Franciscan as their spirit was the one she wanted for herself.

After the Novitiate, Srs. Liz, Martinian and Quentin set out for their new ministry in far

away Australia in 1946. They found the boat trip long and boring. As young religious, they did not mix much with the other passengers. They were homesick, no phones, no letters, and restricted communication.

When they finally reached Brisbane, they were delighted to get started in school. They loved the teaching and found the class alive with well behaved children. The school was small at that time and had a good name. They knew all the families, all the people of the parish and found a very beautiful family spirit. They visited the homes of their students regularly and knew them all by name.

Liz taught in our schools until December 1975. She initially taught in Bardon Primary and was Teacher and Principal in Coolangatta, Kedron, Coorparoo and Marymount Primary (at Burleigh Heads)



Liz did Pastoral Work in Burleigh Heads Parish from 1976 to 1999 and lived in Marymount Convent and at Coolangatta. During this time she received an award for her outstanding service to families. Liz had the opportunity to make a spiritual renewal in the Fatuna Retreat Centre, Wellington, New Zealand in 2000 and found it to be a transforming event in her life. When she returned to Australia, she went to Toowoomba where she worked in Parish Pastoral Ministry and was greatly missed by all when she retired to Kedron in 2010.

Srs Noela Leamy and Francois Wridgway



Sr. Paulette Golding 60 Yrs.

The Franciscan Friars and Sisters ministered in the Kedron parish where I was born during the great depression. On 22nd February 1930 I was baptised by Father Fidelis Griffin OFM, who was the first parish priest.

I attended the primary school, St. Anthony's, a Franciscan school which was situated on the top of a hill opposite the church of "The Little Flower" St Therese of Lisieux. After lunch/playtime at 1.30 we would line up in our classes and walk across Turner Road to visit the church and say many Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorias. Visits to the church were instilled into the children as being very important. Our pioneer Sisters impressed me greatly by their hard work, poverty and their trust in Divine Providence and this is what attracted me to become a Franciscan.

Being blest with good parents and having a Franciscan background I chose to enter the Franciscan Novitiate on the 24th May 1951. This is the life I wanted and prayed for, so at the age of 21 my dream came true. My first profession was in 1954 when I was missioned to teach in our school in Coolangatta, St. Augustine's.

I spent 40 of my 60 years of profession teaching in all our primary schools around Brisbane and the Gold Coast: Kedron, Silkwood, Bardon, Coorparoo and Burleigh Heads. For three years I also taught children with special needs, which I found very rewarding. I will always remember these days with fond memories.

In December 1996 I retired from teaching and was given the work of setting up the archives for the Province which I enjoyed thoroughly for fourteen years. (*"As Archivist, Paulette did a wonderful ministry in gathering, filing and preserving material."* **Sr Noela Leamy**)

Prior to this work and not being computer literate, I attended the U3A classes in the city and from then on actually taught myself.

Greccio is the name of the building in which I live with three Sisters who are in the same age bracket. My life is much quieter now and I might say a little on the contemplative side.

I thank the Sisters for their love and support over the years and remember those who have died and were a part of my life.

Praise and bless my Lord for His goodness to me!

Sr. Paulette Golding

Sr. M. Francois Wridgway 60Yrs.

My mother's sister and brother were among the original Columbans and their letters home from their



mission in China had a big influence on my own Missionary desires. I grew up wanting nothing else but to go to the foreign missions. Many of my companions entered different orders but none of them felt right for me. It was when I was doing Mothercraft training at Broadmeadows, that a Sister of St Joseph told me about the Franciscans in Aitape to whom she regularly sent food

parcels. Our sisters had only just begun their mission and I was very interested in being part of this mission. The Franciscan Sisters from Kedron had just sponsored a group of four sisters to open a Mission in Sissano on the north coast of PNG. They had been invited by the Friars especially to care for the women and children in that

area. The original group included Srs Agnella, Rose, Leo and Agnes who arrived at their Mission in September 1949. Now at last I felt that this was just right for me too so I made arrangements to go to Kedron for my Novitiate.

In 1954, after I had finished my Novitiate I was one of the lucky ones to find myself on my way to Sissano and Fatima, the two areas where our sisters worked with the women and children. We were seven Franciscan Sisters at that time, four in Sissano and three in Fatima. Our sisters had large schools there not only for the local children, but for boarders from every parish able to send them. We taught huge classes because there were no other schools available for the children to attend.

I spent 10 great years doing Maternal Health Patrols full time, by motorbike, horseback, by foot and four wheel drive vehicles while Sr Camillus kept the home fires burning in the Home Clinic.

These were particularly happy years and full of adventures and precious time with the village women. I ministered in many places, Sissano, Ulau, Aitape, Lemieng and Lumi teaching, nursing, Family Life Co-ordinator and Diocesan Health Secretary.

In Sissano a hospital was built where all the women were able to come and deliver their babies as the death rate of newborn babies and of mothers in labour was very high. Both Sissano and Fatima are very isolated and the sisters had to act as doctors and give of their skills at all times.

The sisters also gave themselves generously to the education of the children and to the care of the boarders. Later a feeder school was opened in Aitape where children from all parishes were given a chance to further their education. This later became St Ignatius Secondary School.

In addition to their ministries in Education and Health, the sisters spent a lot of time running girls' clubs and doing general visitation in the villages, later moving into pastoral work, marriage enrichment, youth ministry and other fields.

Moving to the Wewak Diocese, the sisters opened a house of refuge for deserted and battered women and children, victims of domestic violence in so many forms – a haven of peace for women in need away from the safely and support of their villages.

I thank God for the opportunity I had to live and work with the beautiful people of PNG.

Sr. M. Francois Wridgway

Not letting herself be tied down by physical limitations“ Fran” still gets around on an electric scooter—as fast as it will go! Editor.



Sr. Ursula Wilson, 60 Yrs.



Sr Mary Dolores (now Ursula) entered the Missionary Franciscan Sisters three months after I did in 1951 so we did our Novitiate together – were received as novices, and professed on the same day July 2nd 1954.

Many of our Novitiate days were fun days and we made the most of this time. In between the work, study and prayer, our free time was made up of story-telling and laughter. We looked forward to our evening recreation when we shared these.

Ursula longed to be missioned in Papua New Guinea but it was to be several years before she was free to go. She spent the years in between teaching in Silkwood (North Queensland) Coolangatta and wherever there was a need. At last to her joy she also was missioned in Papua New Guinea. She loved being with the people and spent a lot of her time doing visitation and general bush patrols where the Sisters would supervise bush schools and teach catechetics.

She was several years in Kamberatoro in community with three other Papua New Guinean sisters. This was a very isolated Mission and a difficult one but Ursula never complained. On her visits to Aitape for meetings etc. we were able to again take time to exchange stories.

Ursula was also in Ulau. Fatima, Lumi and Aitape at various times and the people as well as our young PNG sisters often bring up incidents from these precious days. She had a gift of bringing out the fun and joy in others and she was loved by each one for this.

Ursula also spent some time in Rome working with our sisters there and returned to her beloved Papua New Guinea when this time was over. She continued her visitation to the villages always interested in hearing how the families were going and sitting on a log, listening to the sharing of the women.



After some time, Ursula had to return to Brisbane for health reasons and was living in Kedron, I always enjoyed my home leave times when we could once more catch up to each other. I well remember her pet bird who greeted her each time she passed by the cage. She loved animals and all of nature as a true Franciscan.

Ursula is now a resident in the Holy Spirit Sisters Nursing Home in Carseldine and continues to radiate joy to those who surround her.

Sr. M. Francois Wridgway

Farewell from Pauline

As I conclude my term of Office as Leader of the Australian Governance Circle I wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Sisters over these past four years to the Australian Circle Newsletter. I do hope that you have come to know the Australian Sisters and their Ministries and our Ministry at Mt Alvernia and Delamore a little better. Mission and Ministry will always be a priority. Although, *how* we minister has changed because of our changing circumstances, each of us witnesses to the love of God in the world and for each person we encounter. May we all be blessed during this year that celebrates Consecrated Religious Life.



Sr. Pauline Robinson

E. H. Corner

When St. Mary MacKillop (Mother Mary of the Cross) wrote the life of Fr Julian T. Woods (co-founder of the Australian Josephite Sisters), she claimed that he possessed a 'great capacity for hard work', which she said, Sir Joshua Reynolds once gave as a synonym for genius. This year we recall that Elizabeth Hayes began her *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels* in 1874, 140 years ago, a mission in journalism that required a 'great capacity for hard work' and we acknowledge her genius.

Elizabeth was blessed with having not only Sisters who worked closely with her in the printing ministry, but she also had a special friend, contributor and associate in Fanny Montgomery. Fanny was the Hon. Mrs. F. Montgomery, eldest daughter of the 1st Lord Leconfield. In 1842 she married Alfred Montgomery by whom she had two daughters, Mrs. Finch of Burley-on-the-Hill and the Marchioness of Queensberry, Mrs. Douglas. Research and archives of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters provide knowledge of Fanny from the time she met and assisted Elizabeth (M. M. Ignatius) as the latter struggled to finance her young community in Sèvres, outside Paris, in 1866.

Recently Phyllis (Sr Clare Veronica) Wyman, researcher of the History of Women Religious, indicated interest in Fanny Montgomery and the Douglas family. She has brought to our notice new research which allows us to learn more of Fanny in the period before Elizabeth knew her. When Fanny became a Catholic she was 'banished' from her home and forbidden to live with her children. It was Sybil, married into the Queensberry family, who led Wyman down the track of Fanny's descendants, direct and lateral, who became Catholics and there were many. One of Fanny's houses was at Ovington Square London, near the London Oratory, and it is thought likely that Fr. Dalgairns, an Oratorian and her spiritual director, received her into the Catholic Church.

Fanny made a retreat in 1855 or 1856 in the Paris Mother House of 'Les Dames Augustiniennes de l'Assomption', now known as 'Religious of the Assumption' founded by Anne Eugenie Milleret de Brou (M. M. Eugenie of Jesus.) As a result, Fanny decided she would like to be involved in the preparations for a London foundation and was the initial benefactress of the Assumption Sisters' Earl's Court Foundation. She rented and prepared Earl's Court Lodge before the Sisters' arrival in September 1857, and lived there for about 2 years, trying to be as like a sister as she could but her moods were understandably erratic, as she was constantly pining for her children. Wyman's research claims that Fanny thought she understood religious life, particularly the vow of poverty, but that she didn't and she left in about 1859. Fanny had also lost a little boy who died when he was 6, so life in general was difficult for her at that time.

Wyman has also followed the story of how Fanny's Children and the Queensberry's managed to visit her in Naples (Italy). Fanny's involvement with Franciscans of Crawley and her support of their Church is of interest to this researcher. Elizabeth Hayes' *Annals* published that beside Fanny's outstanding generosity to Elizabeth, Fanny supported the Crawley Franciscan Capuchins who on her death and at her request buried her, 'vested in the Franciscan Tertiary habit' in their church. Wyman was glad to learn that Fanny contributed to Elizabeth's illustrated monthly publication for some 20 years. Like the MFICs, she is searching for a photo of Fanny for she cannot imagine that a person of such social standing would not have sat for several portraits.

Sr. M. Francine Shaw

¹ Mrs. R. Vansittart, "In Memoriam", *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels* XVIII, no. iv (1893).

² Ibid.

 *We wish all our readers a very happy, holy and peace-filled Christmas season!* 

