



Marist Sisters: Region of Asia-Pacific

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Aotearoa-New Zealand-Australia-Fiji-The Philippines-Papua New Guinea

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As I extend our Christmas greetings to you this year I am conscious that world leaders are gathered in Copenhagen for the United Nations' Climate Change Summit. Pope Benedict XVI recently expressed the hope, for which I'm sure we all pray, that the meeting will identify actions respectful of creation and favourable to development founded on the dignity of the human person and oriented towards the common good. We offer our prayer for the intentions of this significant meeting in the season of Advent – a time of waiting in joyful hope and expectation for the coming of Christ, the Word-made-flesh, who entered into our world, a world in so much need today. In preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus may we be ever mindful that, as Mary received the Word of God and gave 'flesh to the Word', Marists who endeavour to live by her spirit must be principally concerned with continuing just that work, to give 'flesh to the Word', Christ to the world. Wishing you and your families every joy and blessing this Christmas, assuring you of our prayers and thanking you for your partnership with us in mission.

In Mary's Name,

Sr. Julie Brand SM – Regional Leader



NEWS FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A recent notable occasion in which Sr. Lavinia Henry was very involved all through the months of planning and practice, as well as the week itself, was the annual Women's Rally for the Diocese of Bereina held this year in the village of Apanaiipi on the far western border of the Diocese.



This event is organized by the CWA (Catholic Women's Association) and is eagerly anticipated. A major focus of the five-day Rally is the handing over from one Parish to another of the pilgrim statute of 'Mother Mary', an almost life-sized statue of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

much venerated here. It had been going around the Kanosia Parish, so Srs. Kate McPhee and Kathleen Bright had the privilege of taking it on the back of our vehicle on the three-hour, often very bumpy, journey to Apanaiipi. A group of men and women sat on the truck with the statue to hold it in place and all along the road as we passed the people expressed love and reverence for Our Lady. Seven Parishes of the Diocese were represented at the Rally, and about one hundred people from our Parish of Kanosia attended. Apanaiipi is situated by a wide river in which the women bathed after their 5.30a.m. rising each day. They had slept on large platforms called 'patapata' which have thatched roofs but no side walls to allow a breeze to pass through but which also allowed the rain to pour in on the first night, though no-one was concerned. They cooked over open fires, preparing bananas and other vegetables, wallaby and fish, all enriched with coconut milk. During the day there was praying and singing, talks on various subjects such as Family Life, Violence, Abuse and Aids, and competitions from marching to

delicious cooking. Much appreciated was the input of two women from Australia, members of the Charismatic Movement, who led the women in prayer especially prayer for each other and their loved ones. The week ended in a great spirit of joy and unity as the women packed up, thanked their village hosts and departed for home. Since coming to Papua New Guinea early this year we have been part of many celebrations as we visited villages and settlements of the Parish of Kanosia and at Diocesan events in Bereina. We have found the people very welcoming and appreciative of having the Marist Sisters in their midst. We, in our turn, feel very happy and privileged to be here in the "Land of the unexpected".

NEWS FROM AOTEAROA-NEW ZEALAND

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS.

We were saddened to hear of Sr. Carmel Conran's death in Sydney on September 23rd. A memorial Mass was celebrated for her in St. Mary's Church, Mt. Albert, on October 3rd. Fr Grahame Connolly SM was the celebrant and gave an uplifting homily sharing his memories of her. This occasion provided an opportunity for us to acknowledge Sr. Carmel's contribution to the Congregation and to the Church in New Zealand, especially in the area of Catholic Education. Ex-students, parishioners and staff from the Catholic Education Office were present. On the afternoon of October 18th Marist College Ex-Students' Committee organized a celebration in recognition of the function of Colin House, a building which is soon to be demolished. Following refreshments the many ex-students, staff past and present, and Sisters enjoyed a Powerpoint presentation prepared by Sr. Lorraine Campbell outlining many aspects of Colin House over the years. The presentation concluded with Mother Bernard's own account of the erection of the building and the reason for its name. It was begun on November 15th in 1945, Feast of Fr. Jean Claude Colin, and concluded on the same day the following year at a cost of £11,444.15/6!! While Colin House is now empty awaiting its fate, a new classroom block over the present Library and

Technology building is to be opened and blessed in early February next year.



MINISTRIES

Sr. Makareta Gilbert is a member of the Tawa community in Wellington and her ministry extends to the Te Hono group, which she supports by her presence at the recitation of the Rosary every Tuesday evening. She attends their meetings and goes with them to such national gatherings as the Hui Aranga and the Waka Aroha. Twice a month Sr. Makareta attends the Maori Pastoral Meeting. In the new year she will be involved in teaching Maori spirituality. For the last fourteen years Sr. Patricia Sarju has been chaplain to the Catholic Indian community in Auckland. Its members have arrived here from India itself, Fiji, Sri Lanka and South Africa. Sr. Patricia's ministry involves regular visits to homes and hospitals and taking Communion to those unable to attend Mass. She attends prayer groups, wedding anniversaries and especially funerals, as this is greatly appreciated by the people. Over the years Sr. Patricia has trained helpers to assist her in organizing Masses and caring for new arrivals.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Our lives have been touched by the deaths of Sr. Carmel Conran on 23rd September and Sr. Laurentia Furlong on 17th October. We give thanks for their faithful and loving Marist commitment over many years and commend them to God with hope and joy in the Resurrection. Prior to Sr. Laurentia's death we had the joy of celebrating her 70th Jubilee of Religious Profession, together with that of Sr. Muriel Austin, and the Diamond Jubilee of Sr.

Martha Drummond. This special occasion was celebrated on 25th September at St. Anne's Nursing Home, Hunters Hill. Recently Sr. Beverley Lewis, together with Sr. Miriama Dituvatuva (Fiji), participated in the 'New Life' Renewal Program at Marymount Mercy Centre, Castle Hill. There were 23 participants of ten different nationalities. The enriching program included sessions on contemporary aspects of Theology, Scripture, Spirituality, Ministry and Life Development Studies.

MINISTRIES

Srs. Catherine Lacey and Mary Farrelly write from Outback Queensland: "Because our area of pastoral ministry is so vast with great distances between places, during the year we have attended gatherings such as the annual Agricultural Shows, field days conducted by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and other events where we can meet up with a number of our people at once. Preparation for reception of Sacraments continues, often with lessons over the phone for those who are more isolated. Because of the lack of priests here in the West Sr. Cath also baptizes some of the babies."



Sr. Therese Campbell writes about an aspect of her prison ministry: "This year I have been privileged to be part of a Companions Team presenting the *Seasons for Growth* program to a small group in the Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre. Over a five-week period, using the imagery of the four seasons, we focussed on understanding the nature and impact of change, loss and grief. In a prison setting there are multiple and acute losses – loss of freedom, of self and of past life, of material goods, of family and

friends, of social roles. The task of grieving is to accept the reality of these losses and the changes that are associated with them." Sr. Elizabeth McTaggart is a pastoral carer at St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. She says: "In my ministry I have been called on for diverse roles such as to be a witness at a Marriage in the case of a person facing death; to say prayers for those who have had life support systems removed; to assist at funerals; to be with grieving or anxious families; to take Communion Services. My most valued role is as a Eucharistic Minister. I also assist our patients from New Caledonia who are French speaking and are often lonely and confused." Sr. Patricia Bartley is involved in ministry to migrants and writes: "The world is a much nearer place as I listen to stories of people speaking about their homeland or the traumas they have experienced on the way to our country. My students come from many countries – Russia, Estonia, Lao, Taiwan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Italy and Peru – all so beautiful and friendly towards each other. If only this were so around the world." For some years Sr. Veronica Taylor has been taking morning tea once a month to 23 very special people who live in a hostel for the intellectually and psychologically disabled. She says: "While there is nothing elegant in this place, there is much that is delicate and delightful and worthwhile. Taking morning tea that is different from the usual fare, more scrumptious than usual, gives me the honour of the entry to what is their home. Time is short and some tend to have a degree of reserve. However, warmth and trust build up and some confidences are humbling." Sr. Margaret Sharma volunteers at the Hunters Hill Day Care Centre for Seniors and enjoys supporting various organised activities and outings. Sr. Margaret also finds rewarding her ministry in massage therapy offered to the senior Sisters. This helps muscle relaxation, circulation and flexibility of the whole body. Sr. Judith Lythall writes: "This year our Blacktown community joined the parishioners of St. Patrick's for a Parish Assembly. 'Living conversation' ensured that a number of concrete and specific goals were developed from the 40

small working groups assembled. The goals fell into the areas of faith formation, liturgy, community, social justice, evangelisation, grounds and maintenance, and finance. Since then small committees have been established to work on the implementation of these goals.”

NEWS FROM FIJI

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Recently a number of Sisters joined Sr. Loyola Grehan to celebrate her Jubilee - 70 years of Religious Profession. It was a simple Marist celebration with Mass co-celebrated by Fathers Milio SM, Donato SM and Mateo (Diocesan) - all ex-students of Sr. Loyola's! A personal 'Magnificat' that Sr. Loyola wrote was read during the Eucharist. In January, the Sisters in Fiji will meet in Nadi to mission Sr. Teresia Raione to the Philippines, where she will take up her appointment as Assistant Novice Directress in the International English-speaking Novitiate. We will also farewell Candidates, Valerie Ho and Birisita Bibi, who will be travelling to the Philippines with Sr. Teresia to continue their programme of Initial Formation.

MINISTRIES

Nadelei Catholic School has introduced Girl Guides to the girls of the School. After doing some courses, Sr. Temalesi Colati gathered those who were interested and gave them some basic training. A camp was held in the School - a first of its kind, which turned out to be a great success. Nadelei School was visited by Sr. Vika Rokowai and her Class One from Mt. St. Mary's School, Nadi. This has become an annual event for Sr. Vika's students and their parents. They usually take presents for the children and the School.

NEWS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

In Matina, Davao City, a new community of three Sisters - Monica Lum, Sheila Manalo and Arlene Bello - began on 17th August. The house was blessed on 3rd September followed by a celebration with the Marist Family, friends and

neighbouring religious. We also celebrated the 11th anniversary of the Marist Sisters' foundation in the Philippines on 26th August. The celebration of the Holy Name of Mary on September 12th was fully enjoyed by members of the Marist Family, Marist associates and friends - more than 200 in all.

FORMATION

On 21st November (Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin) three young women from Papua New Guinea were received into the International English-speaking Novitiate - Mary Lily Aisaga, Celina Gavia and Catherine Sariman. This special occasion was cause for much rejoicing.



Our vocation ministry, which we value as a means of spreading our Marist charism, is a top priority for us. Recently twenty-two women attended our Chavoin Club Christmas recollection and party. The Chavoin Club was founded in 2003 to help young women discern their vocation.

MINISTRIES

Our Sisters continue to serve where the needs are greatest: Sr. Edna Gado at the TALIKALA Centre for women in prostitution, Srs. Sheila Manalo, April Acero and Lilibeth Cajés at the City Jail, Sr. Terube Ata at the Home for the elderly, Sr. Monica Lum at the Missionary Sisters of Charity's Home for babies and at the school for Bajao children, and Sr. Arlene Bello with the Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious dialogue. Our Sisters also continue to participate in and support justice and peace groups/organizations in upholding the rights of the poor and oppressed.