



Marist Sisters Australia

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Dear Prayer Companions,

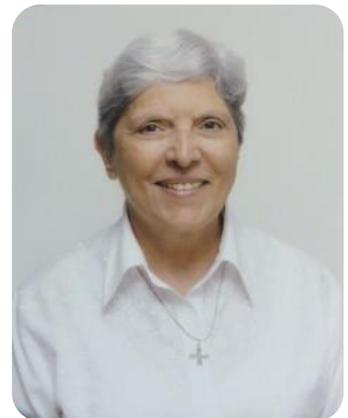
Once again we come towards the end of another year. We celebrate that beautiful Season of Christmas - the birth of our saviour. Sometimes it is hard to get past the commercialism of Christmas with all the rush and bustle. However, if we can stop and reflect on what great love God has for us we can use this time to give God thanks for all the blessings of the past year and look forward to what is to come.

As you would be aware from the last Newsletter sent from the Region of Asia Pacific our Congregation has had a change of structure. Our Regional Leader, Sr Grace Ellul was elected at the General Chapter in April as our new Congregational Leader and Sr Vivienne Goldstein (Regional Councillor) was elected as General Councillor.

I quote from our website:

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and the inaugural day of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Marist Sisters throughout the world marked an historical moment when our Congregation took on a new shape as one WHOLE made up of 13 Units. The Marist Sisters' General Chapter held in April 2015 invited us to be Women of the Word, embracing life and to affirm the values of diversity and flexibility. The Chapter did not decide on governance structures, but has opened the way for each current Sector to reflect on its situation and its needs. From this fresh starting point, each group is invited to shape its future governance model according to its own reality. The vital issue is the life of the Unit, the mission of the Unit, its desire to promote and enhance life.

Sr Grace Ellul, Congregational Leader, in her video address to the Congregation urged us to open wide our hearts, our minds, our very selves and embrace the Whole that we are as Congregation.



Sr Grace Ellul,
Congregational Leader



Srs Kate McPhee, Cath Lacey & Noelene Simmons

Here in Australia we gathered to celebrate on Saturday 12th December with prayer where we reflected on the journey our Congregation has taken and asked God's blessing on this new beginning. This was followed by afternoon tea. It was a great occasion to meet up with our Sisters before Christmas.

I have been appointed Unit Leader and Srs Kate McPhee and Noelene Simmons the Unit Councillors.

During this year we celebrated the entry into eternal life of four Sisters - Srs Mary Picone (Bartholomew), Helen Leary (Elizabeth), Patricia De Coek (Pierre) and Rose Shields (Stanislaus). Each of these Sisters has made a great contribution to our Congregation and our Unit in their own way.

Sr Mary Picone (87)



was born in Wagga Wagga of Italian parents, the youngest of four. When Mary was a baby her mother died and so she was brought up by an aunt. Mary entered the Congregation in 1949 and was professed in 1951. Mary taught primary school in Sydney, Melbourne and northern Queensland. Her specialty was teaching boys. Mary was appointed Provincial Bursar, a role she had for many years putting our finances on a firm footing and helping to set up a fund for Aged Care long before it was needed. In her later years Mary was a pastoral worker to migrants and refugees in the Campbelltown area. She was greatly loved and revered by those she ministered to. Her last few years were spent in Marian House and then in St Anne's Nursing Home. Throughout her life, her deep love of Jesus and His Mother and her Marist vocation was at the heart of her journey. Mary died very peacefully at St Anne's on 8th February.

Sr Helen Leary (80)

was born in Gundagai, the youngest of three. She never forgot her country roots, and enjoyed spending holiday time with her sister, Margaret, and family on their rural property in her home district. Helen was professed as a Marist Sister in 1956. She taught in Woolwich, Burwood and for a brief time at Lami in Fiji. In 1967 Helen took up the role of assistant Novice Directress at Merrylands. Helen shared with her students her own deep faith and her loving commitment to Mary's Congregation.



At Richmond in western Sydney Helen became very active in parish ministry. Helen was keen for all to taste God, and never lost opportunities to invite people to share with one another the movement of the Spirit at work in their lives. While Helen knew the joy of life, she also knew suffering. At various times in her life, serious episodes of ill-health led Helen to spend lengthy periods in hospital.

It was Helen's great spirit of faith and trust in God - and her deep love of Mary - that inspired us all, enlivening hope and confidence in the God of love. In all the pain and struggle of life she joined her sufferings with Christ and remained faithful to the God who loved her into being. Helen died at Ashburn House on 16th May.

Sr Patricia De Coek (91)



was born in Hamilton (NZ) – 2nd of four girls. During the depression her family moved to Sydney, settling in Cremorne. At Sacred Heart parish Mosman Pat met her life-long friend Norma Wood who also became a Marist Sister. It was through the Marist Fathers at St Patrick's Church Hill that Pat met the Marist Sisters, entering at Merrylands in 1945. After her profession Pat was sent to Marist Sisters College, Woolwich to teach until she was appointed Superior of a large community at Merrylands.

In 1960 Pat was appointed Novice Directress and remained in this position until she was appointed as General Councillor in Rome in 1966. Her Marist calling took Pat to many places. One of her favourite ones was as Pastoral Associate in the parishes of Burwood and Torquay in Melbourne where she led Scripture and Prayer groups and participated fully in the life of the parish. Even when she was semi-retired in Haberfield, she still reached out to people from all walks of life and loved to share the Scriptures. Although the move to St Anne's was a great cross for Pat, she entered fully into her new life. Pat died at St Anne's on 8th September (Mary's birthday).

Sr Rose Shields (86)



was born at Mortlake – youngest of six children of Irish parents. Two of Rose's siblings became Religious – John a Christian Brother and Tess a Sister of the Good Shepherd. Rose was another vocation that came to the Marist Sisters through the Fathers at St Pat's, entering at Merrylands in 1950. Rose was always ready to respond to the call of the Congregation which took her to our communities in Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and New Zealand.

At a relatively young age she was appointed Assistant Novice Directress. After her teaching career was over, Rose served in pastoral ministry, particularly to the sick, elderly and housebound. Aware and thoughtful of others she sought, especially as community leader, to make the community a place that was relaxed and homely where people could be themselves.

Rose was a homemaker. Her many domestic skills, sewing, cooking, gardening all served to give joy, goodness and beauty to the life of her Sisters and to others who might need or appreciate some little lift in their life. In all circumstances of her life Rose's simple but profound spirit of prayer and gift of herself to God in Mary's way gave meaning, purpose and strength to her life.

Rose's faith filled approach to life was very much reflected in her patience in suffering and in her acceptance of the Cross in her life. That was so apparent in recent years when she was called to an increasing identification and union with the crucified Jesus. We can but guess her interior suffering as we increasingly lost touch with the Rose we knew and more and more rarely saw the responses she managed – a smile or even a tear in her eye. Rose died at St Anne's on 17th October.

And so, our year is quickly coming to an end.

We give thanks for all that has been in 2015 and look forward to the blessings of 2016.

We really appreciate your prayerful support and ask that you continue to pray as we journey forward as Women of the Word.

We wish you and your families God's blessing at Christmas and throughout the coming year.

Sr Cath Lacey and all the Marist Sisters in Australia



Please take some time to check out our websites and be up-to-date with all our News.

Marist Sisters Asia Pacific: www.maristsisters.org

Marist Sisters Congregational site: www.marists.net

