

IJALT Newsletter

March 2019



Greetings - Tena Koutou - Saludos - Bon Dia

In this month's newsletter we have:

- ◆ A Report by Mary Hemmings
- ◆ A Reflection on St Joseph by Sr Monica Cavanagh RSJ
- ◆ Communication Update
- ◆ A Report from our IJALT January Meeting
- ◆ Website Update
- ◆ General Chapter of the Sisters of St Joseph

God Bless IJALT

The origins of the Josephites were quite unique as a religious order, with Mary and Julian establishing a group that was very mobile and adaptable to changing circumstances. This adaptability has seen the Sisters move from their key focus on education to a range of other ministries. Their work continues to change and the ability to change and adapt has always been vital in keeping them relevant to serving God's mission.

As Associates we too need to be open to change. How do we keep relevant in our communities? Who are we enabling to 'join this story'? How can we invite others into this legacy in which we have shared and been nurtured by for many years?

We recognize that some groups have adapted, have stepped up and taken on leadership and are adding new members, keeping relevant in their particular context. We also recognize that other groups are diminishing in size and some have written to say, "Since Sister left, we haven't got around to meeting". So many faithful Associates who have contributed much over many years are becoming less active and we cannot expect them to keep doing what they have done.

We are also aware that without new blood, we as a Movement will cease to exist.

The establishment of IJALT is one of the changes that the Sisters saw as necessary in the evolution of their Josephite mission and that of the Associates. Sr Eileen Lenihan, our co-ordinator in 2013, recognised the need for lay leadership of the Associates. This was, in essence, a 'coming of age' of the Associates. In our formative years the Sisters had established groups and walked with us. By 2013, many groups no longer had Sisters living in their local community. Associates themselves had 'taken over the reins' of both local and regional groups, with the Sisters themselves fostering this.

IJALT has been given the responsibility of the oversight of our Associate Movement. We are very aware that there is considerable diversity amongst our groups and regions. We are also aware that our Church and world are so very different to when we were established. Our recent Royal Commission alone has brought into the spotlight some of the accountability that we need to have in place within our Church communities. The Sisters themselves have many processes and protocols for the safety and well being of their communities.

In light of all this, we are needing to initiate some changes. These include a new handbook which will have policies which need to be in place to continue to be under the banner of the Sisters of St Joseph, to safeguard both them and us. These will include a Code of Conduct, Copyright and Privacy policies. There is great variation in how people 'become Associates' so a program for new members and to help establish new groups, with room for adaptation, will hopefully support this process. Being aware of who makes up our Movement has led to the establishment of our database, with appropriate protocols regarding individuals' privacy.

We know that many will feel quite daunted by these changes. As an authentic pathway in the Josephite family this has become necessary. The essence of who we are as Associates, namely men and women who '*respond to the call to live the charism of Mary and Julian in our daily lives in our unique way*' remains core. The Sisters continue to walk with us and we with them as together we make a difference in our world.

We are grateful for the range of responses from our recent letters. We hope improved communication processes will ensure all are kept informed. In the months ahead each of our team members will visit a few groups in the Regions, providing an opportunity to meet in local contexts and to listen to and talk with our members.

Wishing you and your families many blessings as we move towards the celebration of new life at Easter.
Mary Hemmings *Chairperson: International Josephite Associate Leadership Team (IJALT)*

Journeying with Joseph

This reflection was written in 2017, but is just as relevant today. As Associates we are called to be compassionate risk-takers as we journey towards a revitalisation of our Josephite Associates. The same is true of the Sisters as they journey towards their Chapter. Given the recent attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, we are also called to take a risk to reach out to those in our communities who are different, who may have different beliefs, to really get to know them.

May Joseph's courage and gentleness inspire you to be compassionate risk-takers... The small beginning which took root in Penola on 19 March 1866 has indeed blossomed. You, our people, have called us once again to be risk-takers like Joseph our Patron and to be women and men whose hearts are in tune with the heartbeat of the world.



Photo of a statue at Mount Street,

Let us recall how Joseph set out on three significant journeys – one to Bethlehem, one to Egypt and one to Nazareth. None of these were planned. Each came about because Joseph was able to listen to the whispering of God to his own heart. Each journey took Joseph to the edge of his existence, into an unknown situation. Our life too takes us on many journeys which broaden our horizons, challenge our securities, and open for us new possibilities.

In response to the call of a census, he takes the pregnant Mary to Bethlehem where he will witness the birth of the Child Jesus. Imagine the joy and delight Joseph experienced at the sight of the newborn. This experience Joseph shares with so many fathers. **May we, like Joseph, rejoice in the gift of children whose gift of wonder and delight opens our mind to new imaginings.**

In the midst of these joys, Joseph dreams. The dream awakens him to the call to flee from the dangers that surround him. He, like so many refugees in our world today, begins an arduous journey through the desert into Egypt. Joseph's heart stands with those fleeing the realities of war, starvation and violence as they face the perils of what it means to be a refugee. **May Joseph be a protector for them and inspire us to reach out and be a welcoming face.**

Joseph sets out to return with Mary and the child to his homeland. In doing so, he cannot return to the village of his childhood for he must seek a new place to call home – Nazareth. In Nazareth, Joseph's hospitality becomes the place where Jesus learns the value of inclusion. It is here in this home with Mary, Jesus grows in wisdom and insight. **May Joseph be with us when we need to find a new place to call home.**

Sr Monica Cavanagh rsj 2017 Used with permission

Communication

Our IJALT Newsletters are produced three times a year: in early April, August and December.

Emails will be sent at these times from our database in Sydney.

We are asking that postal copies be included in the next Regional mail out that occurs following these dates. As each Region has a different schedule, with some being posted 3 times a year and others 4 times, this will mean that the IJALT newsletters may vary when they actually arrive by post.

Anyone wishing to change from postal to email, please let your **Regional contact person** know your details. This will enable them to update their records and provide a co-ordinated approach to our Central database.

We are hoping that this system of communication will enable us to stay in contact with our Associates. If further information needs to be disseminated between newsletters we will co-ordinate with our Regional Associate Leadership teams to work out how best to do this with regard to our 'postal' Associates.

If individuals or groups wish to communicate with IJALT, contact Mary at 1 Slipper Court Fulham Gardens or mary.hemmings@sosj.org.au or 0417 871 904 or any of the Team via IJALT@sosj.org.au

In January Catherine Birt from New Zealand and myself were privileged to be invited to be a part of the first IJALT meeting for 2019, held at Mount St North Sydney.

We were welcomed by the team who have been working very hard, under the direction of Sr Moya Campbell rsj, to work towards the Josephite Associates/Companions becoming a flourishing, sustainable, autonomous group, into the future. This is a very exciting time to be a Josephite Associate (Companion in New Zealand) a time for all of us to consciously live out the Charism and Spirituality of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

For many years the Sisters of St Joseph have nurtured and assisted in the expansion of the Associate groups



Back Row: Catherine Birt, Beverly Badcock, Anne-Marie Wilkinson,
Pauline McGuire, Noreen McLeish
Front Row: Moya Campbell rsj, Mary Hemmings, Helen Dougherty

throughout Australia, New Zealand, Timor Leste, Peru and Scotland. Now it is our turn to take on the responsibility of passing on the Josephite story and charism. The members of IJALT are a very dedicated and generous group who are providing the framework for this to happen. During the last two years they have almost completed a review of our current documentation as well as producing all that is required now for organisations. We will soon have access to materials that will provide all Associates with a common Formation Program and Administrative Handbook.

It was not all hard work! On Monday morning Daniel Ang, a most inspiring young man from the Diocese of Broken Bay, shared with us a positive outlook on the future of the Church in Australia. Daniel reminded us that as Josephite Associates we have something great to share, a way of being that can make our world a better place. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

“What are we waiting for?”

Noreen McLeish Hamilton Vic

WEBSITE NEWS

In the next few weeks if you check the SOSJ website you will see a few changes to the Josephite Associate page.

“Where is that?” you may ask.

Here’s a quick guide:

1. Put sosj in your search engine (eg: Google) or type in <https://www.sosj.org.au>
2. In the blue banner on top of the home page you will see **Get Involved** –click on this
3. A ‘dropdown’ box will appear; select **Josephite Associates**. This will open the front page which tells a little about who Associates are and gives email contact links for *Associate Contacts*, including IJALT

*We are aware that some of the states/countries are not operating yet but hope to have them all assigned in the near future. The IJALT one IS working.

On the right-hand side of the page there is a menu.

One item listed here is **Associate Newsletters**. If you click directly on this word you get a newsfeed with ALL the latest Newsletters from around Australia and New Zealand.

However, if you click on the arrow that points down you will see 5 States plus NZ named and you can click directly on your location to see your current and previous Newsletters.

(continued next page)

SO, what is going to change on our website?

We are adding to the menu on the right and you will see the following headings and then their dropdowns:

- IJALT**
- **News** (Here you will find our newsletters, general letters, happenings etc.)
 - **Documents** (This will contain administrative documents that your groups might need to access)
- EVENTS**
- **Upcoming** (You will find events that could relate to all Associates such as Retreats, Conferences, Leaders meetings, Regional Days.... And also some local activities)
I'll be asking your leadership team to send me any information you would like us to advertise.
 - **Past Events** (Events like the QLD conference which is currently sitting in the side menu, will go here after they have occurred.)

ASSOCIATE NEWSLETTERS - This will continue to look as it does now, with each State/Country listed.

PRAYER RESOURCES - We will build this up with prayers that can be used for your Associate gatherings. To begin we have some sheets already created by different States/Countries which have been used in their newsletters. We will eventually put them into theme headings as we develop this section.

So give us a couple of weeks, then login and have a browse! We hope you will find these changes valuable.

Anne-Marie Wilkinson Communications Co-ordinator

General Chapter of the Sisters of St Joseph September - October 2019

Prayer in support of the Sisters as they prepare for their 27th General Chapter

***God, Power of Love,
accompany the Sisters in their
preparation for the General Chapter.
Prompt their generosity and honesty
their trust and openness
their imagination and vision
for mission and communion.***

***Help them to listen to one another
to the world around them
to what they have not yet thought of
to the clarifying of truth.***

***Alert them to prophetic voices
as they humbly enter into the journey
the better to glimpse your presence
the better to appreciate one another
the better to feel the Spirit
inviting, prompting, healing
raising the powers of love.***

Amen

Every six years the Sisters have a General Chapter at which they discern the direction for the Congregation for the following six years and elect a Congregational Leader and team. The theme chosen for this year's Chapter is:

“Raising the Powers of Love — Go and Do the Same.”

The Sisters are reflecting on this theme through the lens of the parable of The Good Samaritan. This parable is in response to the question asked of Jesus:

‘Who is my neighbour?’

As Associates we, too, may like to accompany the Sisters in their preparation for Chapter by giving some time to focus on this story and enable it to speak to us in our situations. We may also like to pray the prayer on the left in support of them.

“Which of these three was the neighbour to the traveller who fell in with the robbers?”

The answer came: “The one who showed compassion.”
Jesus replied: **“Then go and do the same.”** (Luke 10: 37)

- ◆ Who is our neighbour?
- ◆ Who are we called to minister to?
- ◆ Are we like the Levite and priest: too preoccupied with our daily business or of keeping to the rules of the day and therefore unable to reach out?
- ◆ Can being a good neighbour reach out to the Earth community so that we are ministering to this also?

As Josephite Associates how can we ‘raise the powers of love’?