

Companions News

Welcome to the **JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS QUEENSLAND** Quarterly Newsletter

Celebrating **Summer** — December 2020

"So great is the strength we possess in our unity."

Mary MacKillop (30/08/1874)

In recent times Queenslanders and all Australians have rallied together as never before. We've experienced a year like no other in many of our memories, except save for those who witnessed, or were affected by, the impact of the worldwide Spanish Flu epidemic which came to Australian shores in 1919. Between one-quarter and one-third of all Australians contracted it, resulting in 15,000 deaths, including my mother's oldest brother. Baby Arthur's death at fourteen months had a long-lasting effect on his parents and to later-born siblings. To avoid such a widespread catastrophe again when Covid-19 appeared and began to spread worldwide, we were asked to forgo many of our personal freedoms for the sake of the greater good. We obeyed the stay-at-home restrictions to help curb the spread; we gave up some valued personal liberties; we experienced absences at births,



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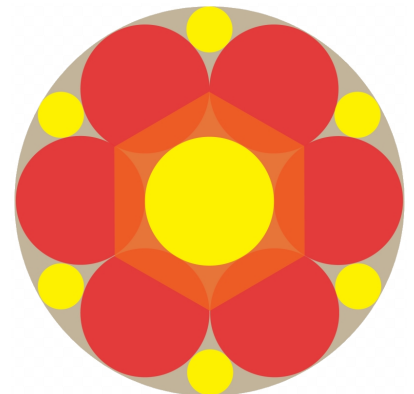
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weddings and funerals; even our Mass attendance was severely curtailed; we keenly felt the loss of family gatherings. Yet most of us could see the wisdom and endeavoured to comply. We judged that our personal freedoms needed to take second place to the protection of the wider community. We responded together and we have grown in our sense of communal identity.

Saint Mary MacKillop worked hard and long to pursue her goal of a unified congregation of sisters who were able to focus on their core values and aims, rather than be fragmented and less effective. She envisioned a congregation of sisters who did not live apart from the people in religious buildings, but who sought to go out and engage with people wherever they were in the ordinary circumstances and situations of their diverse lives. It was precisely because of this unity that the sisters were able to work cohesively together to achieve the mission to which they had been called. Mary's vision united them together to accomplish some remarkable achievements in often harsh physical and mental landscapes and among people who often had few resources on which to draw. As the congregation began to expand rapidly, and often into remote areas, the sisters very quickly became far removed physically from each other. There was an urgent need to provide cohesion, support, and spiritual accompaniment.

Mary recognised the need to support her sisters wherever they were in this far-flung country or in New Zealand. She travelled extensively to visit them and especially where they were more



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isolated. When she could not be physically with them, she wrote continuously, providing spiritual and moral support. It was a lifeline that kept them all united. Fortunately, the records of her copious writings form an important part of our legacy today and therefore our newsletter themes for this year have focused on some of these.

"So great is the strength we possess in our unity" is one of Mary's messages that I believe is even more relevant for us today. As Josephite Associates, keen to retain our unity, we have been undertaking a process of discernment over the past few years to rediscover our roots, to tap into the values that underpin our ministry, and to seek new ways forward so that we can improve and grow in our mission. We've come to recognise that we are not just little groups of people working away in isolation, but that we are part of a wonderful, powerful, international, global endeavour tasked to make the Good News available to everyone. We now recognise ourselves as Josephite Companions, melded deeply with the Sisters of St Joseph, and poised to continue that mission more fully in our own lives and circumstances, but always drawing on the strength of that combined unity. If we are

brave enough to trust Mary's advice and belief that our strength does indeed lie in our unity, together we can let go of any fear of losing the past, and surge forward together to embrace a new and even brighter future. Let's pray that Saint Mary MacKillop and Saint Joseph will continue to bless, invigorate, and encourage us as we continue to dream and achieve new realities together.

Take a moment to reflect:

- How do Mary's words *"So great is the strength we possess in our unity"* relate to my life as a Josephite Companion here and now today?
- What can I do to foster greater unity in my own life?
- How does it affect my relationships with my loved ones?
- Do these words remind me to be more loving? More forgiving?
- Is there a new message here for me as a Josephite Companion?
- Can I readily adapt to change?
- How can I contribute to the unity and strength of our Josephite Companion organisation and our relationship with the Sisters?

Janette Dobson

NEWS FROM THE CHAIR

Very warm summer greetings to you all.

As we prepare this newsletter in early November, it is also appropriate to wish you Christmas Blessings.

This year has seen some changes to how we are recognised as associates with the Sisters in mission.

On 17 October, we welcomed the amalgamation of all Josephite lay Associates into the new **Josephite Companions**. It has been a long journey, especially for those members of the International Josephite Associates Leadership Team (IJALT) who accepted this task under Sister Moya Campbell and Mary Hemmings to explore ways in which all of us worldwide could come to be recognised as one cohesive, united group, working to continue the Josephite mission in companionship with the Sisters of St Joseph. Just as the Sisters in recent times explored ways in which their different congregations could successfully merge, so too did their Associate Movements need to successfully merge.

Congratulations must go to IJALT for all their hard work, their exploration, their consultation, and their execution of the sisters' mandate to achieve this milestone! Our new Companions Association is now formally recognised as a truly authentic pathway to mission in the Josephite tradition. It will now be the responsibility of all of us to embrace this mission and work together to foster the kingdom of God in our place and in our time. There is much work we can do together!

Pauline McGuire



ADVENT/CHRISTMAS PRAYER

This little Christmas blessing was part of an Advent/Christmas prayer experience prepared by the Josephite Companions Aotearoa Leadership Team (New Zealand) and attached to the SOSJ website recently. You may like to reflect and pray on it as we approach Christmas.

Christmas Blessing

Whenever we gaze into a crib this Christmas season
May new hope and joy flood our spirit.
Whenever we watch babies and young children playing
May a new energy for a better world effuse our hearts.
Whenever we are tantalised by the aroma of a bbq or roast cooking
May we unwind, relax, and enjoy time off.
Whenever the crush of family and friends overwhelms us
May the hospitality of our hearts expand.
Whenever we provide a meal or bed over the holidays
May we experience love and appreciation.
Whenever we spy our reflections in the mirror or pool
May we find ourselves images of God.
Whenever we put our feet up for leisure
May the humble presence of the Incarnate One companion us.
Whenever we feel distance from each other around the world
May the Christ child draw us into unity.
Amen.



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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING!”

By now all of our members will be aware that as from 17 October the Josephite Associates became the **Josephite Companions**. This has necessitated some changes for our bank account and contact details.

While the BSB and account numbers for our bank account remain the same, the name of the account is now: **Josephite Companions Queensland**.

Our email address is now: **qld.companions@sosj.org.au**

Our new phone number is: **0474 947 296**. You will be able to leave a message at any time. The phone will be checked regularly and any queries will be answered at the earliest opportunity.

Any donations which are not directly deposited into our bank account should be posted to:

Queensland Josephite
Companions
Villa Maria Convent
123 Warren Street
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006



Reminder...

Please make use of the resources contained in the Sisters of St Joseph (SOSJ) website: www.sosj.org.au/. It is free to access, but please adhere to any copyright restrictions.

You will find valuable information about Mary MacKillop, Julian Tenison Woods, the history of the congregation, prayer resources, copies of newsletters from Companions in Australian states and New Zealand, as well as access to purchases via the online shop.

There has been a series of articles focusing on Sisters in Rural Ministry, showcasing the work they do, the circumstances in which they perform their ministry, and describing the people to whom they minister.

Don't forget to look today. Sister Lynne Freestone from Cloncurry in Qld has written a wonderful snapshot of her life in this remote, rural landscape and it certainly deserves to be recorded.

SPOTLIGHT ON A COMPANION

Carol Leary from Cairns

Carol's Josephite mission journey began over 25 years ago when she became an RSJ Associate. It was early days for the movement then, as both the Sisters and Associates struggled to explore, grow into, and fully understand the mandate given by the Congregation's chapter to journey together. However, Carol was delighted to be able to become part of such a new apostolate that connected her more deeply to Mary MacKillop and to the Sisters of St Joseph. She was able to recognise the potential for it to grow; she embraced that call and threw herself wholeheartedly into mission, and supported that by travelling to Brisbane and participating in conference opportunities to determine our future direction.

Carol has been an important part of the glue that binds together the Cairns Companions. Following in the example of Nick Rand and Bruno Mayne, who have now both gone to their heavenly reward, Carol has ensured that this small but dedicated group of people has been able to stay united together and true to the charism, with a strong emphasis on the life of Saint Mary MacKillop. Carol has a very empathetic nature which draws her to others. She usually prepares a monthly prayer gathering but now, with all the difficulties posed by COVID-19, it will become every two months. The Cairns group meets in the Mercy Place Retirement Village Prayer Room, as this is a very convenient venue and suited to some of the more elderly members.

Carol prepares a prayer sheet with a suitably enlarged font for one member who experiences visual difficulties. There is time for reflection, including appropriate music and images on her iPad to aid that reflection. At the conclusion, members enjoy a cuppa and a chat together, so typical of any Josephite gathering. For any Companion who is not able to attend, a copy is mailed out to them at home for their private reflection. Often the group can receive Holy Communion during a Liturgy of the Word at Mercy Place. There are currently eight companions, with a further six enjoying heavenly peace.

Now a widow of eight years, Carol is active in her local community and very determined to make Mary MacKillop more widely known. She makes sure that the local schools receive age-appropriate books on the life of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods as a gift from the Cairns Companions. Being involved with a few of the local schools, where she is recognised as a Josephite Companion, has meant that she is a wonderful example of what it means to be part of this Josephite mission. For example, St Francis Xavier's Primary School at Manunda recently unveiled a sculpture of Mary MacKillop and invited Carol along to the occasion.

Not content to rest on her laurels, Carol saw an opportunity to enable the Josephite story to be further enlarged in the Cairns region when it was announced that a new secondary college was to be developed in conjunction with James Cook University, Cairns Campus. This is to be quite a unique partnership, with buildings to be erected in the grounds of the university, with a strong focus on innovation and technology. When names were being selected for the new college, she proposed that of Julian Tenison Woods, particularly considering the explorations he conducted in the far north of

Queensland and Papua New Guinea. She saw that as being part of Cairns Diocese's history and was a little disappointed when Saint Cardinal Newman's name was finally selected rather than her proposal. Not one to retreat, her new goal is to propose that a science laboratory or similar at Newman College be placed under Julian's care. We wish you well Carol as you strive to continue the Josephite story in far north Queensland.



Allora Josephite Companions

With the relaxation of COVID restrictions, we were delighted to be able to resume our prayer group meetings. Subsequently we decided to meet more frequently, now being bi-monthly. The focus of our last meetings has been the celebrations surrounding the 10 year Anniversary of the Canonisation of Mary MacKillop and the launch of the Josephite Companions.

As a group we were able to plan and participate in the Mass on the weekend of the Canonisation Anniversary. Several of us participated in the Courage Hour on the Friday evening as well as the 10 days of reflection beforehand.

In the following week we met in a member's home and watched both the Courage Hour and the video launching the Companions name. We all stated that the Courage Hour had a deeper meaning when we were all together and we have resolved to watch it again in the coming year. We finished the meeting with a delicious shared lunch and lots of chatter.

We thank the Sisters of St Joseph for the Commemorative "Take Fresh Courage" booklet. It certainly is a valuable prayer resource as well as a lovely keepsake. We also look forward to the new Companions Handbook.

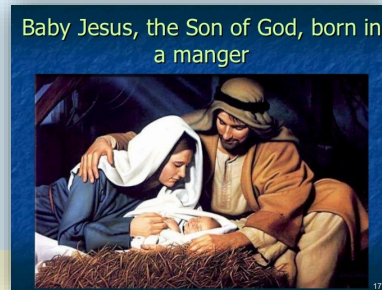


"The Son of God" by Jeffrey Archer

He was born in a barn, his father a carpenter, and his mother a decent woman, but they were of no significance, and certainly couldn't have afforded to give the boy a private education. And yet, as a teenager, he was arguing the toss with his elders and betters in the council chambers. He never got a proper job, just roamed around the countryside, unshaven, and living off bread and water and the occasional fish, while offering his opinions to those who cared to listen. He became the manager of a football team known as The Disciples, not one of them a star, in fact the twelfth man let the side down by accepting a transfer fee of thirty pieces of silver to play for the opposition. The authorities eventually arrested him as a rabble-rouser, But couldn't decide what to charge him with, other than the fact he claimed he was the Son of God. They strung him up with a couple of criminals, and when he finally gave up the ghost, rather assumed that would be the last they'd hear of him.

The Disciples were relegated at the end of the season, in fact the captain denied on more than one occasion that he'd never been a member of his team. When he died at the age of thirty-three, there were no obituaries in the local press reporting his achievements, no glossy supplements highlighting his colourful career, no radio programmes to discuss his legacy, and no box sets recording any of his miracles. But then, He'd never relied on focus groups to advise him on current trends, or advertising gurus to spend millions promoting his brand, or spin doctors to sharpen his image, and he didn't require social media to keep his followers up to date, so you could be forgiven for assuming he'd be forgotten in a few days.

So how can one explain that over two thousand years later, Jesus Christ is still the best-known celebrity on earth? Could it just be that He was the Son of God?



The **Companions Leadership Team Queensland** wishes **joy, deep peace, and blessings on you and your family** as we prepare to celebrate the feast of Christmas. Although it may not be the particular celebration some of us had planned, nevertheless, and despite COVID-19 restrictions in place, our prayer is that you will experience the deep peace and joy that alone comes from knowing you are loved and valued by your God.

We conclude with Mary MacKillop's own words dated 7 December 1899:

Though many of us will be far apart, we can be united in spirit and pray for each other at the Crib and at the Altar.





DONATION TO THE QUEENSLAND COMPANIONS MOVEMENT

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PHONE NUMBER/S:

AMOUNT GIVEN: (PLEASE CIRCLE)

\$20 \$30 \$40 \$50 OTHER \$.....

ALL DONATIONS CAN BE FORWARDED TO:

JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS QUEENSLAND LEADERSHIP TEAM
VILLA MARIA CONVENT
123 WARREN STREET
FORTITUDE VALLEY QLD 4006

PHONE: 0474 947 296

EMAIL: qld.companions@sosj.org.au

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