



Josephite Companions Aotearoa

Nga hoa pumau o Hato Hohepa ki Aotearoa

FRIENDSHIP ◆ PRAYER ◆ SERVICE

WINTER NEWSLETTER - June 2014

Dear Josephite Companions Aotearoa,

Winter has arrived!! This month in Auckland Michael Leunig has been speaking at the Readers and Writers festival and I am struck again by his words about winter

"...as darkness gathers, our hands grow cold. It is time to go inside. It is time for reflection and resonance. It is time for contemplation. Let us go inside". From 'A Common Prayer'.

Josephite Companions Aotearoa Leadership Meeting

The leadership group met in Whanganui on March 7-9th. We worked on finding ways of visiting and contacting all the groups of interested Companions around the country. A new brochure has been developed and is being distributed.

We heard about the Junior Joey's group at St Francis School in Whangarei. It is hoped that other schools may like to form similar groups.

Members of the group have changed their place of residence since our last meeting. Sr Jill McLoughlin has moved from Christchurch to Auckland to work as part of the Trans Pacifico leadership team. Sr Rita Cahill has moved from Taumaranui to Gisborne where she will keep a continuing presence in a town where the sisters have served for 100 years. Virginia Hillgrove from Christchurch and Eileen Fleming from Whanganui have resigned from the leadership group. We thank them for the valued contributions they have made over past years.



We agreed to give \$500 to the Mary MacKillop Education Centre which provides an Alternative Educational Programme under the umbrella of the Kauri Trust. It is an initiative that aims to foster a young women's ethical, social, emotional and intellectual development. It was previously called "Beautiful Daughters".

We also watched a video called "Awakening the Dreamer" by the Pachemama Alliance. The major question we were asking ourselves is "What will it take for us to create a world that is environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just. Instead of thinking of these as three separate units we see that instead they are 3 interrelated facets of one profoundly interconnected whole."

PERTHVILLE PILGRIMAGE

Following the Canonization of Mary MacKillop, Pilgrimages, were set up round several of the historical places that housed something of the story of Mary, Julian T. Woods, and the developing Institute in those early years. One such is the very poignant story frequently referred to as 'The Separation!' This event took place at the Josephite Convent known as 'The Vale.' In early April of this year, I was privileged to attend this Pilgrimage in Perthville in NSW.

The story in brief:

Mary MacKillop had only just had the sentence of Excommunication lifted, and the Sisters had once more gathered round their Foundress, when Bishop Matthew Quinn of Bathurst, requested Sisters to

make a Foundation in his Diocese. Julian assured Mary of the Bishop's willingness to allow the Sisters to live according to their Constitutions! Sisters Teresa, Hyacinth, Joseph Dwyer, and a postulant set sail for Sydney, and onward to Bathurst and the Vale. Matthew Quinn from the outset had great designs for 'his' sisters, and it wasn't long before the sisters realized those designs. The Bishop wanted ties with Adelaide and Mary MacKillop severed, he would be their Superior, and would have complete control over their lives. Two years down the track, saw Mary once again travelling, but travelling to Perthville to find a resolution, if that were possible with the Bishop.

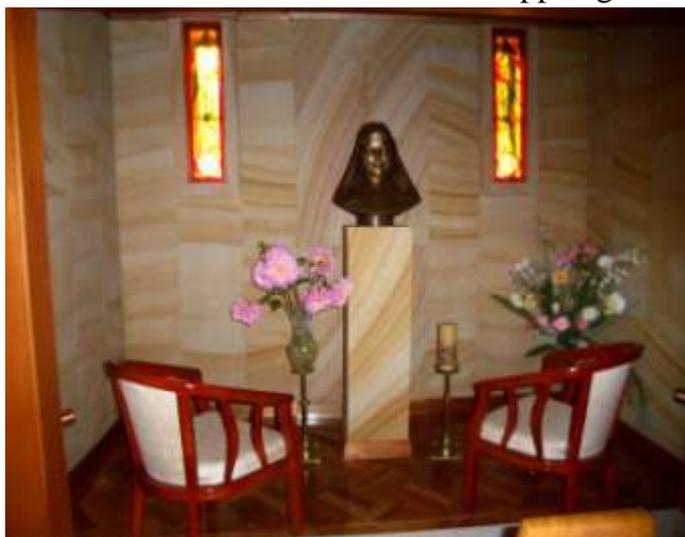
Enroute to Bathurst Mary received news that Sr.Teresa MacDonald, a personal and dear friend to Mary, as well as the leader of the Bathurst Community of Sisters, had died. The Bishop refuses permission for Mary to visit the Sisters at the Vale, fearing her influence; instead, she was to stay about 40miles distant at a place called Wattle Flat. The coach enroute to Wattle Flat, passed close by 'The Vale' at a pub 'The Hen and Chickens' whilst Mary obeyed the Bishop, the Sisters themselves crossed the creek to the pub, to spend some time once again with their beloved Mary! , However the Bishop was adamant, for the Sisters to remain in the Diocese was to accept his demands. Mary had little choice, as Rome had approved the 'Constitutions' so she withdrew the sisters, leaving the novices and postulants along with Sister Hyacinth who had volunteered to train the young sisters.

For the Sisters themselves (both those who left with Mary and those who remained at the Vale,) there was much pain and sadness at the Separation, and as the years went on, the stories blurred and sadly misunderstandings of the story grew. The Sisters remaining in Perthville, under Bishop Quinn over the years developed and grew in numbers becoming the 'Mother House' for the Federation Sisters of St. Joseph. Whanganui was a Foundation from Perthville.

Part of Our Pilgrimage took us to Wattle Flat - what a beautiful spot now, sporting a newly erected stone Church built by the locals. One could almost feel the turmoil, the pain of the sisters in that place, as we read the letters that the sisters wrote to Mary from the many country convents, expressing their loyalty, hearing their dilemma in the face of what was happening round them. I was struck by the distance that Mary and the sisters had to travel, that is if they were to get out to Wattle Flat - 40miles in a beautiful comfortable bus is quite a different thing to 40miles on rutted roads and crossing over the mountainous track - in a coach! where even the bus dropped gear!

Our pilgrimage at the Vale brought us close to those wonderful women on whose shoulders we all now stand. One special ritual took us all to the little cemetery at the Vale, where Teresa MacDonald was buried, along with so many of those sisters who suffered much in those early years, but whose presence there is a tribute to their faithfulness.

AND NOW! Some one hundred and twenty-eight years later, the Perthville Sisters applied to Rome to once again be united with Mary MacKillop's Sisters!



The Vale Chapel - Shrine to Mary MacKillop

AND NOW! Some one hundred and twenty-eight years later, the Perthville Sisters applied to Rome to once again be united with Mary MacKillop's Sisters! - The 2nd 3rd May, saw the Perthville Sisters of St. Joseph fused with the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart!

Sister Rita Cahill

PERTHVILLE JOSEPHITES JOIN THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH OF THE SACRED HEART

Earlier this month 510 folk packed the Mary MacKillop College Hall in Bathurst, NSW to celebrate the occasion of the fusion of this branch of Josephites with the Srs of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, where the main congregational administration is now in North Sydney.

This was a very privileged moment, because it was at Perthville in 1876 when the “separation” occurred, largely due to the Bishop of Bathurst requiring the Srs who were present in Perthville at the time to remain diocesan. The decision of some Srs to remain there and train the Bishop’s new postulants for that diocese, actually led to the establishment of four other Congregations - in Whanganui in 1880, and in Tasmania, Goulburn and Lochinvar. God works in mysterious ways! Lochinvar remains diocesan at this point in time, while the other congregations have fused with the larger group which is under central government. We now



number over 900, in Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Peru, Brazil, Ireland, Scotland and East Timor. What has amazed us Sisters is that, despite the intervening years, with various levels of contact between the two groups (diocesan and central) the spirit of Mary and Julian has remained strong and vibrant. Customs, prayers, attitudes and habits are very similar and well ingrained.

Both founders did comment that they hoped there would be reconciliation at some stage and we are the ones fortunate enough to witness that!

Sr Marie Skidmore,
Whanganui

Sister Marie Skidmore holds the monogram that used to be on the Sister’s habits. Sister Joan Farrell of Perthville holds the crucifix at the fusion ceremony.

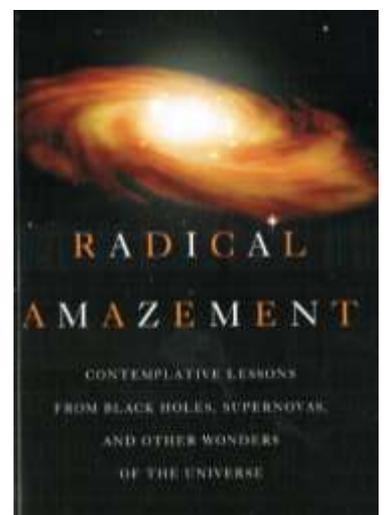
ECO SPIRITUALITY BOOK CLUB

Each year the women and men who attend workshops and retreats at the Josephite Retreat Centre in Whanganui give suggestions for the future at a pot luck tea.

Last year they asked for a book club, and we now have 22 keen folk attending these meetings. We decided on the topic – ecology and spirituality – because there is a lot being written these days about the plight of the planet and the Christian response to this. Alongside this there is a need for increased appreciation of the wonder of just being “at home in the earth”, each day!

Our first book is called Radical Amazement., by Judy Cannato. Judy was an Associate of the Srs of St Joseph in the USA. She recently died of cancer. We do a couple of chapters of this book each month, and members bring other material they have come across in the media or elsewhere.

We are finding it very beneficial to link this newer theological thought with our daily life, as it brings a greater awareness to the gifts we receive via the natural world we live in each day.



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

DUNEDIN

St Joseph's day for our little Dunedin group was celebrated at the home of Trish Clark. We were joined by Sister Jennifer Schollum, from Balclutha, for an enjoyable get-together. Father Merv McGettigan celebrated the Mass of St Joseph. We finished with afternoon tea.

Natalie Sullivan was our guest. She attended Holy Name School with three of our members, and we reminisced about days gone by. We sang the hymn to St Joseph, that we sang every morning before school commenced for the day.

We look forward to our next get-together, and are planning a visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor to visit three of our group who are now in care. Denise Mitchell

TURANGANUI A KIWA/GISBORNE:

Our autumn meeting was held on Saturday May 17th at the Convent, 15 attended. We have recently welcomed Sister Rita Cahill into our midst and she shared her experience of the pilgrimage to Perthville NSW. Our prayer theme was Mary, Mother of Jesus and members were asked to bring a favourite prayer, statue or devotion to share. One shared a special prayer, another a favourite picture, we also were shown a lovely wooden statue of Madonna and child from Germany, a drift wood Madonna and child from Vietnam, a lovely statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the many times Mary had come to the family's aid. We saw Scapula's and a set of Irish Horn Rosary Beads with a leaflet about how the beads were made from cow horns! We closed with afternoon tea.

Rest in Peace

We pray for the repose of the soul of: Paul Farge, husband of Elizabeth Farge, a Whangarei Companion.



May he rest in peace.



JOSEPHITE COMPANIONS AOTEAROA

As we walk in the footsteps of Julian and Mary, we Josephite Companions Aotearoa respond to the Gospel by reverencing the Sacred in ourselves, others and our environment.

We do this in the ordinariness of our everyday lives by:

- Living simply and prayerfully
- Acting justly with integrity
- Responding to the needs of our time
- Being thankful for God's love
- Providing inclusive hospitality and down-to-earth practicality in the spirit of Aroha.



Peta Lindstrom and Catherine Birt

On behalf of the Josephite Companions Aotearoa Leadership Team