

# IJALT Newsletter

November 2018



*Greetings - Tena Koutou -*

*Saludos - Bon Dia*

In this month's newsletter we have

- ◆ A Report from IJALT Chairperson, Mary Hemmings
- ◆ A Reflection on St Joseph by Mary Cresp RSJ
- ◆ An update from Sr Moya
- ◆ Report from IJALT October Meeting
- ◆ Reports from the regions

*God Bless*

IJALT

At the 1983 Chapter of the Sisters of St Joseph a decision was made to "explore the possibilities of extending our concept of Josephite membership." From this decision, the Josephite Associates was 'born'. Thirty five years later, we as Associates are in a time of renewal. In the beginning women and men who worked side by side with Sisters in schools and parishes, nursing homes and other ministries were invited to become Josephite Associates. By forming small groups and gathering, perhaps monthly or three or four times a year, people who shared the spirit of Mary MacKillop with the Sisters developed a greater understanding of the life and work of Mary and those who followed in her footsteps.

Being proclaimed Australia's first saint has enabled Mary to be recognised by our wider society as a person of great significance. Her work in education and social welfare especially is extremely significant and has continued over 152 years since beginning in the small town of Penola.

We who are Josephite Associates "hold" Mary's story. We acknowledge her as a person who made an enormous difference in her world of the 1800s in early Australia and New Zealand. She served her God in ways that inspired so many women to follow her. Over the years the Sisters have evolved in how they have lived and shared the Gospel.

As Josephite Associates our Mission Statement says: "...we respond to the call to live the charism of Mary MacKillop .... to make a difference in our local area and so further the Reign of God in our world." This means that we too are evolving. As part of this, our IJALT (International Josephite Associate Leadership Team) is exploring how we can best support Associates to continue enabling others to 'join' this great story.

At our recent meeting we focussed on areas such building resources that can provide both insight and nourishment for those who engage with them. We explored how do we 'brand' ourselves so that others feel drawn to working or being with us. We talked about can we acknowledge our similarities yet allow for difference as we straddle five countries and many cultures.

In all of this, St Joseph is a constant. It was he who Mary and Julian chose to be the patron of this new venture, he who continues to inspire us (and certainly Pope Francis) today. In this newsletter Sr Mary Cresp, a former Congregational Leader, has penned a delightful reflection for us on Joseph, providing us with perhaps some different insights into this person of 'quiet' significance. In these weeks leading to Christmas, focussing on Joseph is indeed very timely for us all as "Josephites".

May God's peace and hope and love be with you and your families in Advent and the celebration of Christ's birth.

Mary Hemmings

Chairperson

International Josephite Associate Leadership Team (IJALT)

## 'While You Were Sleeping': A Short Reflection on Joseph

Mary Cresp RSJ



During his 2015 visit to the Philippines, Pope Francis told the people that he has a particular love for St Joseph, and that he has a statue of the saint on his desk. However, this is no 'lily-fied' image of Joseph – it's a statue with a difference, since it depicts Joseph sleeping! 'God speaks to Joseph in a particular way when he is the most silent', explained the Pope. It was while he was resting that this open-hearted man came to realise God's will for him.

Psychologists tell us that dreams are the brain's way of processing, integrating and understanding things that happen to us in life. Since, as St Paul reminds us, the presence of God is at our core – 'In God we live and move and have our being' (*Acts 17:28*) – it is at the level of our unconscious that we encounter what we might call 'God's voice'. For Pope Francis, then, the invitation is to stop work on time and get a good night's rest, trusting that God's action continues as we sleep: 'In this moment of rest in the Lord, as we pause from our many daily obligations and activities, God is also speaking to us.'

St Joseph might be a dreamer, but we also honour him because he was a man of action. Having realised what he must do next, Joseph, we're told, acted immediately. So, too, must we. There will be risk involved. We have no guarantee that things will work out the way we want them to. But like Joseph, we take the next step, conscious that God is with us.

I often think of Joseph as a man in love. He loved Mary. He loved Jesus. He loved God. Obviously, he loved his kin, and found himself in a dilemma when faced with conflicting loves – as a man of honour, he was conscious of the shame he would bring on his family by marrying the pregnant Mary. But when love directs us, we go forward, because 'God is Love' (*1 Jn 4:8*).

Paul Gardiner (*An Extraordinary Australian: Mary MacKillop*, p 47) records the story of Mary MacKillop spending a night locked in the Portland church. When I visited the church some years ago, I was told that oral history has her sitting the entire night next to the Statue of St Joseph that is still there. Personally, when I sat by the statue, I did feel as though St Joseph was enfolding me with protection. Joseph listens to Love ... and Love protects.

Pope Francis shared with us his ongoing relationship with this saint through whom God continues to work: 'When I have a problem, a difficulty, I write a little note and I put it underneath Saint Joseph, so that he can dream about it! In other words I tell him: pray for this problem!' May we, like Pope Francis, sleep peacefully as we open our hearts to God and listen as Joseph did. As 'Josephites', it is his spirit that we share.

## FROM THE ASSOCIATE COORDINATOR SR MOYA CAMPBELL

### REPORT FROM COORDINATOR OF THE JOSEPHITE ASSOCIATES – MOYA rsj

As you are aware I work with the members of IJALT and they have had a busy year as we continue to build a sustainable future for the Associates. Change always presents its challenges but change can also show us new horizons and the way to get there. As the Associate Coordinator, I am full of praise for the members of IJALT and the voluntary time and work they give to the Associates. We have had two face-to-face meetings this year and four Teleconferences. The way forward is becoming clearer. We hope to have the new direction to you all by 2019 and then a Conference in 2020.

A highlight for me this year was visiting the various local groups in Australia and New Zealand. I was received very warmly wherever I presented and it was a productive time as I discovered all that is happening still in the Associate Movement. Some places have been able to maintain a vigorous local group; in other places the group have struggled but kept going and in a few places ageing has taken its toll and the group has closed.

I have completed a Report on the findings of these visits and do hope that when you receive that Report with the IJALT Newsletter that there will be some response from the local groups to the issues raised in this Report. The future of the Associate Movement does depend on the members and their commitment to living in the spirit of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

#### PLENARY COUNCIL 2020 (in Australia only)

This is a Church event that is happening in Australia but maybe the Questions that we are being asked to consider in this country may also relevant for all of us to consider at this time in our Church history. The three questions are:

What do you think God is asking of us in Australia (or it could be Aotearoa/New Zealand, Peru or East Timor) at this time?

What questions do you have about the future of the Church for the Plenary Council to consider in 2020?

Do you have a story of your experience of faith or the Church you would like to share?

Perhaps, in one of your group meetings, you might like to look at these questions. There is much on the website at [www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

#### GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH

The General Chapter of the Sisters of St Joseph will take place in 2019. Sr Monica Cavanagh, Congregational Leader, made the announcement as to when this will happen. The Sisters ask for your prayer at this time as we now enter into preparation for this six yearly gathering where we explore the way forward for the next six

#### OCTOBER GATHERING

Bev Badcock

Mary MacKillop Place North Sydney was the meeting place for the International Josephite Associates Leadership Team in October 2018. We also invited an Associate member from Western Australia and another from Goulburn NSW to provide a broader perspective to our discussion and planning.

At this gathering key initiatives for the future of the Associates Movement and how we can be most effective in continuing to live out the Charism of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods were discussed.

Some areas of interest included the need for Formation of new members and ongoing formation for leaders and members. Many of the present members had strong connections to the Sisters and it is important that their support and guidance is acknowledged. To assist new members the story of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods will help us understand the spiritual legacy that led to the foundation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

There is a need for the availability of resources to be used for prayer reflections and discussions and we explored ways these could be made available to Associate Leaders and members as many are not confident with the use of technology.

The need for communication to all members is of great importance and we looked at ways this could be implemented including the most cost effective way to include all who do not have Internet access.

Our time together went quickly and we were most appreciative of the time and energy Sister Moya Campbell gave in guiding and keeping us focussed on the task at the time. We had time for prayer reflection each day while enjoying the tranquillity of Mary MacKillop Place.

## Associates in Action in Timor Leste

In preparation for the feast of St Mary MacKillop the **Josephite Associates from the Balide Parish in Timor Leste planned two activities.**

1. They accompanied their Parish Priest to his bi-monthly visit to the Gleno Prison for Mass.
2. They organized a novena prior to the feast of St Mary MacKillop for the elderly and for those who wished to pray for healing for the sick.

Each evening, after work, they gathered outside the church at Balide to learn the hymn to Mary MacKillop, to prepare for the Mass at the gaol and for the novena for the sick and that Mass.



They travelled to the gaol with their parish priest Fr Francisco Barreto, in the back of a utility that was given to Father by the Government because he is the official prison chaplain. It is 44km from Balide to Gleno.

Fr Francisco and Associates taken outside the Gleno Prison. Father was delighted to have the help and support of the Associates in his prison ministry.



Each evening, before 8<sup>th</sup> August, the Associates gathered with others in the community for a novena to Mary MacKillop to pray for the sick and elderly. The novena ended with Mass to which the Associates arranged for relatives and friends to bring the sick and elderly. Many had not been to Mass for some time. Afterwards everyone gathered for food and chatting. Anabela Saldanha & Diana Do Rego

## VICTORIA

2018 began with our annual 'Leaders Day' in February. This is the day that the leaders of our groups from around Victoria gather at the MacKillop Heritage Centre in East Melbourne for some reflection & formation time. This was led by Therese Quinn rsj using the story of Mary of Magdala at the tomb being told to "Go and tell my disciples..." The next session looked at the words of Pope Francis and how he has lived this message of going out to the poor, the homeless and all in need. Then Jenny Glare from MacKillop Family Services talked to us about the work she does in uniting families -children who had spent their childhood in care of Josephite, Mercy & Christian Brother congregations, with their mothers & siblings. And the day ended with a Commissioning Ritual for our Leaders.

March then began the first of our Regional Reflection Days which have been offered in Victoria for over 10 years. This is where the Vic Core Team (Anne-Marie Wilkinson, Christine Van Order, Mary Fermio rsj & Noreen McLeish) go out to 5 different regions in the state during the year and offer a day of reflection & formation for all our Associates. Locations are selected so that it is accessible for anywhere from 3-5 different groups to attend. This year the team went to Murchison, Leongatha, Pakenham, Sunbury & Orbost.

The theme this year was Missionary Discipleship. We began by exploring paragraph 120 from Pope Francis' document 'Evangelii Gaudium' (The Joy of the Gospel) and what it means to be a missionary disciple and how we all are called to be one purely by our baptism. Then looking at how we can go about this in our everyday lives and through our commitment as Josephite Associates.

In the second session we explored Mary MacKillop's work as a missionary disciple sharing some of her stories and writings. After lunch we then looked at the life of Irene McCormack rsj and her work and death in Peru. It included a slide presentation to the song "Bright Pearl, Shining Path" (P. Kearney). We then also took some time to look at the work of our fellow Associates in Peru. The day finished with a missioning ritual and in some areas the enrolment of new Associates who had completed the Induction program.

Our Regional Days were all well attended as was our final event for the year -the annual Associate Mass, held in November at the Chapel of Mary MacKillop House in East Hawthorn. This year we were very pleased to have Mary Hemmings and Moya Campbell from IJALT join us for the mass where another nine new Associates were enrolled (bringing the total of twenty new Associates enrolled this year). They participated the a commitment ceremony where all Associates renewed their promises and commitment to the movement. During afternoon tea, Mary and Moya then made a presentation to the gathering on the work of IJALT and included Mary sharing stories of her visits with Associates in both Peru and more recently East Timor.

The Core Team have already had a retreat and planning weekend away and are looking forward to leading and assisting the Victorian Associates in their ongoing formation, celebrating the work of our groups and welcoming more new Josephite Associates in 2019.