

# Companions News

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

**March 2022**

## Editorial

### Friendship and Hospitality

*I seem to be finding so many corners in my heart for one place after another, and one person after another.* Mary MacKillop

New Year's Blessings to you all!

There is no doubt that Mary was kind. Those who knew her often used the word 'kind' to describe her. Mary could relate to the suffering of others as she had suffered much herself. Her heart went out particularly to the needy, poor people and to no-account children. She set about to alleviate their suffering, frequently going above and beyond what was expected.

Joan Chittister writes that those who receive the other with the open arms of God, do so because they have come to know that for all their emptiness, God has received them. She adds that it is necessary to take in without reservation those whom the world casts out, because it is they who show us most clearly the face of the waiting God. (Joan Chittister, *Illuminated Life*)



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Hospitality is the overflowing of a heart that has to share what it has received. Hospitality demands that the people you are serving and the people with whom you serve, are received into your heart. This happened in a beautiful way last year in September when the Josephite Companions offered hospitality to those who came to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the House of Prayer in Townsville. They did this because of their connection to the House which was founded by the Josephites in 1981.

In early February this year, the Townsville Josephite Companions and the House of Prayer Community united to farewell Sister Carmel. Carmel, along with others, was instrumental in establishing the House of Prayer all those years ago. Like St Mary MacKillop she listened to the whisperings of God in her heart. She recognised the needs of those who were hungry for prayer and a deep personal relationship with God. Like St Mary, she was spurred into action, and like St Mary, she trusted that God would provide.

There were many people present at her farewell liturgy in February, among them the Anglican Bishop of Townsville, a sign of how much Carmel is loved and appreciated. She served the Townsville community in a myriad of ways for over forty years. People of the West were truly grateful for her ministry to them. Once more Sr Carmel had seen a need and she responded generously. Together with a very special laywoman, they travelled long distances in the heat and dust. Like Mary MacKillop she went over and above what was expected. She made many friends in that part of the Diocese also and these friendships have endured.

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Carmel was a faithful and loyal member of the Josephite Companion community in Townsville. We greatly valued her many special qualities, her gentleness, her humility and above all her wisdom. Carmel was always welcoming and gracious. Hospitality demands that we let the people we are serving, and the people with whom we serve, into our hearts. And this is how it was, a genuine two-way process. Hilaire Belloc once wrote that laughter and the love of friends are the things that sustain us. Carmel's passion was for spiritual direction, companioning people in their spiritual journey. This ministry, perhaps, was Carmel's greatest gift to so many people over the years. It was this special ministry that gave her immense joy, to be a true 'soul friend.' Jesus became human to show us how to love wholeheartedly, selflessly, inclusively and unconditionally. Hospitality and friendship then are about following God's commandment to love one another. Carmel has now left for Brisbane. When your love is truly giving and receiving, those you love will become part of yourself. So it is with Carmel.

As we draw closer to the season of Lent, let us ask ourselves when and how do we go beyond what is expected. St Benedict tells us to offer an open heart, a stance of availability and to look for God lurking in every single person who comes through the door. Only by opening ourselves wide to another are we transformed by the power of love.

Blessings to you all

*Pauline McGuire*



## *Letter to Companions from the Leadership Team*

**D**ear Josephite Companions

*Greetings to you all, wherever you are across our many countries. We recognise that these times are providing challenges for us all in different ways, including many not being able to gather with fellow Companions. Perhaps the words for February in this year's Josephite calendar provide us with a word of hope from Mary MacKillop at this time: What may seem a great misfortune in one sense is generally ... a hidden blessing.*

*Following our successful Josephite Companions' Webinar last September we are planning an online gathering for Companion Leaders from each Region on 2 April. This will be an opportunity to have input and discussion with other Companion leaders about leadership as we all continue to share God's mission with Josephite hearts, in our different circumstances. Sr Clare Conaglen, the Congregational Leadership team member who is part of JCoLT, will lead us in this process, inviting us into conversation across our leadership groups as we learn from each other.*

*Further information will be provided to Leadership Teams shortly, with starting times ranging from WA commencing at 9am to Aotearoa New Zealand at 2pm.*

*Later in 2022 JCoLT hopes to host another webinar for all Companions who wish to be involved: a time to reconnect and continue nurturing each other as, through Friendship, Prayer and Service, we try to make a difference.*

*For the past few years, we have produced a newsletter in March. This year we are sharing this letter at this time through your Regional newsletter instead, and hope to provide a JCoLT newsletter following our April gathering. This will provide feedback from our Leaders' gathering and information about our proposed Companions' Webinar in September/October.*

*May God's Spirit be with us in all of our endeavours and may we be alert for the 'hidden blessings' that Mary MacKillop alluded to in the opening quote.*

*Blessings to all*

**Mary Hemmings**, Chairperson, Josephite Companions Leadership Team

# SPOTLIGHT ON A COMPANION

**M**y name is Gyan and I am married with three beautiful children. I was born in Fiji. At age 17 I immigrated to Australia. I practised Hinduism for 22 years till I met my amazing friend Hema. She had just immigrated from India. I met Hema at our first job in Melbourne and we became friends very quickly as we both missed home so much. She always talked about Jesus, how he forgives people when they have done wrong. You can ask for forgiveness and you are forgiven. Anyone is allowed to go to church and pray. One day I said to her I want to come to church to see how other people pray. That following Sunday, I found myself sitting in the church and I felt something like the Holy Spirit speaking to me. To be honest I didn't know how I felt but I knew I wanted to go back to church. I didn't tell anyone in my family as I knew they wouldn't be happy. I started going to church every Sunday as I was keen to learn about the gospel. I started going to the Bible group after the Mass and found all the people so welcoming and I wanted to join the welcoming community. After about 4 or 5 months later another good friend Karen introduced me to her brother Mark, whom I have been married to for the last 31



years. Coincidentally, he was Catholic, and he became my sponsor and supported me through Reconciliation, Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. I did all my sacraments during Easter of 1990 including marriage in December at St Joseph's Parish in Melbourne and my daughter was baptised there two years later. St Joseph's Parish will always be a special place in my heart. So, this is how I became Catholic. Later I came to join Mary MacKillop/ Josephite Charism prayer group. I started taking interest when Mary MacKillop was canonised back in 2010. When I first heard about Mary MacKillop, our only Australian Saint, I started reading and searching about her life in Melbourne and South Australia. I was so inspired about how she overcame so many difficulties but still made things happen for the kids and adults regarding education.

I love her motto "*Never see I need without doing something about it.*" I try to live by her motto every day. Last year I found out that she was born one day before my birthday so that makes me want to be even more like Mary.

**Gyan Russell**

## Housekeeping Snippets

**In your prayers** at Group Meetings please remember those Companions who have died and those who are struggling with ill health.



The Team is most grateful for the **generous donations** sent in to our Office or paid directly into our Bank Account. No organisation can continue without the support of its members and your support enables us to support you.

**Happy Birthday to Theresa Harvey** of Rockhampton who will celebrate her 100th birthday on 28 April. Theresa has been associated with our Movement for many years and we wish her every blessing on her special day.



After our **Christmas mailout** we had several envelopes returned and as we had no other details we were unable to contact those members. We would like to acknowledge the passing of our members, some of whom have been associated with our Movement since the beginnings in the 1980s. Occasionally family members will let us know. If you are aware of the death of any Companion in your area please let us know.

Thankfully over the past year some members have notified us of changes to contact details. This is very helpful in keeping the database up to date. If you no longer wish to be on the database please let us know.

If you have been receiving your Newsletters in the post and now have an email address could you please let us know at: [qld.companions@sosj.org.au](mailto:qld.companions@sosj.org.au). As you will have seen in the Annual Report our postage costs for the year are over \$1,000 and every little bit helps. However, we are more than happy to continue posting to those members who do not have an internet connection.



## Old Leadership Team Meeting

Over the weekend 18-20 March the Queensland Leadership Team will be meeting at Villa Maria Convent in Fortitude Valley for our annual Face-to-Face Meeting. We are grateful to the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration who welcome us into their home.

Each year we invite some Companions to join us as Observers. They are then able to return and report directly to the Local Group. It is also an opportunity for them to join with us in deliberations and have them share their insights and wisdom.

If you have issues you wish to raise at any time, not just at the annual Meeting, do not hesitate to contact the Team. We need to know your concerns and hopes.

### St Joseph

In 2021 Pope Francis focused the eyes of the Church on St Joseph. For us as members of the Josephite family St Joseph is embedded in our lives and spirituality. Mary MacKillop saw *"in St Joseph a perfect mirror of confidence in God"* and encouraged her Sisters, and us their descendants, *"In every difficulty apply to St Joseph with confidence and you will not be disappointed."*

Throughout the history of the Church many Saints and holy people have been devoted to St Joseph. The following are quotes from just a few of them:



*"There are many saints to whom God has given the power to assist us in the necessities of life, but the power given to St Joseph is unlimited: it extends to all our needs, and all those who invoke him with confidence are sure of being heard."*  
**St Thomas Aquinas**

*"St Joseph did not do extraordinary things, but rather by constant practice of ordinary and common virtues, he attained the sanctity which elevates him above all other saints."*  
**St Joseph Marello**

*"Knowing by experience St Joseph's astonishing influence with God, I would wish to persuade everyone to honour him with particular devotion. I have always seen those who honoured him in a special manner make progress in virtue, for this heavenly protector favours in a striking manner the spiritual advancement of souls who commend themselves to him."*  
**St Teresa of Avila**

(The quotes are taken from [www.stjosephourguide.org](http://www.stjosephourguide.org))



## DONATION TO THE QUEENSLAND COMPANIONS MOVEMENT

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

**EMAIL:** [qld.companions@sosj.org.au](mailto:qld.companions@sosj.org.au)

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