

Josephite Companions of South Australia

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Friendship Prayer Service

Winter 2023

July 2023 Newsletter

A Graced Moment in Time

By Kenise Neill rsj

Kenise is a Josephite Sister who has worked for many years with First Nations people. Together with Adnyamathanha-Mirning woman Leith Mynott and Wiradjuri and Wongi woman Lizzie Wright, she presented at our International Women's Day event in March. As we move towards the Referendum later this year, hopefully this article by Kenise will help many to come to a greater understanding of what an opportunity this is for all Australians.



Artist: Mary Southard csj – used with permission

"It is essential to show special care for Indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others but should be the principal dialogue partners." Pope Francis, Laudato Si'

We are in what could be a graced moment in time in 2023. The Voice Referendum is an opportunity for all of us to listen and to hear the beckoning from times past and now for positive change in Australia.

An Aboriginal Elder and a Torres Strait Islander Elder share their thoughts on what a YES referendum vote will mean for their children and the Nation:



"God is good and has brought light and help when all was very dark."
MMK 1899

"The one battle I don't want you to never, never forget, my grandchildren, is the battle we won in 2023 – when there was a great movement in this country to include Aboriginal people in the Constitution and a permanent body to Parliament. I want you to never ever forget that because during this time your Elders were shouting loud and clear. They said, 'It is about time we are in this Constitution; it has been going on too long ... simple ... don't worry about the words.' And I want you to remember that, my grandchildren. So that is why you are in the Constitution today."

Vicki Walker, Muthi Muthi Nation Elder
Quotation from a letter to her grandchildren written in 2040.

"The Yes/Voice campaign is an important opportunity to create a more just society through giving Indigenous people a direct voice in our nation's governance. It will ensure that our voices are heard, and our concerns taken into consideration when decisions are made, and it will provide us with greater access to resources, services and opportunities for self-determination."

Uncle Guyson, Torres Strait Islander Elder

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The call for a Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Constitutional recognition has been part of the national conversation from within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in Parliament, within many faith traditions and in the Australian community over many years. One attempt for recognition was in 1988, during the bicentenary year, when there was a motion proposed by Australian Christian Churches in consultation with Indigenous Leaders.

Along with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, faith traditions and Civil Leaders, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council recently published a statement supportive of a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament. Click [HERE](#)

The Voice to Parliament comes from the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. The Uluru Statement is the outcome of decades of conversations and meetings, culminating in a series of regional dialogues, including ordinary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups in 2017.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* is a gracious request from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities asking the people of Australia for *Voice, Treaty and Truth-Telling*:

Voice – Representatives from First Nations People will provide a permanent voice to be heard and have input to Parliament and executive government on legislation and policies that impact their lives.

Treaty – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sovereignty will co-exist with Crown Sovereignty. We are the only Commonwealth Nation who has not signed a treaty with First Nations People. A treaty will not mean that land owned by government and/or individuals can or will be forcefully acquired by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People or organisations.

Truth-telling – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have asked for a process of truth-telling about Australia's history that acknowledges colonial conflict and dispossession, and the strength and resilience of First Nations People and the gift of culture.

Truth-telling is not about guilt. It will provide a time and place for deep healing for all of us.

Australian Elder 2021, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Bauman is inviting us to a healing place as a nation and beyond:

"When we heal ourselves, we heal our ancestors from wounds that run deep in our family.

When we heal our ancestors, we heal the world from wounds that run deep in humanity."

The YES vote is asking for a Voice (the first point from the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*) being embedded in our Constitution which will recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the First Peoples of Australia. In summary, the Voice design principles include:

- The Voice will give independent advice to the Parliament and Government.
- The Voice will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People based on the wishes of local communities.
- The Voice will be representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, gender balanced and include youth.
- The Voice will be empowering, community-led, inclusive, respectful and culturally informed.
- The Voice will be accountable and transparent.
- The Voice will work alongside existing organisations and traditional structures.
- The Voice will not have a program delivery function.
- The Voice will not have a veto power.

Click [HERE](#)

Our Constitution is the foundational document of governance for Australia, and Constitutional change can only be achieved through a referendum.

If over 50% of the voting population vote Yes, a Voice will be enshrined in our Constitution, and this will ensure it remains a permanent part of our democracy.

The 'No' vote campaigns by some Aboriginal people and others include propositions that the Voice won't deliver meaningful change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, or that Sovereignty and Treaty should be

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Celebrating Mary MacKillop's Feast Day

*Saturday 5th August 2023
2pm*

*Bethany
4 High St, Kensington*



Gather for an opportunity to share in what draws people into Mary's story today and her relevance across generations.

There will also be a *Celebration of Commitment* for people who have chosen to follow in Mary's footsteps as *Josephite Companions*.

Afternoon tea will be provided and there will be a raffle to support Josephite ministries.

RSVP by Friday 28th July 2023: 0417 871 904 or SA.Companions@sosj.org.au



Rural Reflections

**Sunday 10th September 2023
11am**

**St Mary MacKillop School
10 Bagot St, Wallaroo**

The Josephite story in Wallaroo began in 1869. This legacy continues today, in the St Mary MacKillop School and Copper Coast Parish. Come and share in their hospitality and story.

Travel by bus or car. All travellers to meet at the school at 11am.

The bus will leave Adelaide, from the High Street Café, Kensington at 8.30am.

Programme: morning tea, input session, lunch, brief tour of Wallaroo, returning to Adelaide by 5pm.

Cost: \$15pp

RSVP by Friday 1st September 2023: 0417 871 904 or SA.Companions@sosj.org.au

~ 2023 DATE CLAIMERS ~

- **Webinar:** 2nd September – see page 6 for details
- **Environment/Ecology Part 2:** 7th October
- **Christmas Carols:** TBA

*"May our good God
help us all."
MMK 1876*

prioritised ahead of a Voice to Parliament. As with any changes, and especially something as important as a referendum, there are many differing views and sometimes the information we receive can confuse us and create fear about what could happen.

Multiple Constitutional experts have pointed out that the Australian Constitution does not outline or determine policy details. The Constitution sets up systems and structures while giving Parliament, through our elected representatives, the power to decide the detail, and to change the detail over time.

In contrast, to those who are fearful of the inclusion of the wording 'executive government,' many Constitutional experts and lawyers, including our Solicitor General, are saying that a Voice to Parliament will be "effective," if it speaks to both the executive government and the Parliament. The Voice will create no obligations upon Parliament or executive government to respond to representations.

Constitutional Experts and others have also outlined that the Yes Vote will not be a platform that will undermine our equality of citizenship, will not result in obligations on the executive or Parliament or create ongoing court challenges. It cannot be used as a "money grabbing exercise by self-appointed Aboriginal Leaders." A Voice will not be making decisions, it will not have the power to veto

Parliament or executive government. A Voice will be an advisory body only, and Parliament will decide what a Voice looks like and how it operates.

Whilst some changes to systems and structures will be needed when and if a Voice is enacted, with a Yes Vote we can expect that life will not change for most of us. By contrast, a Yes vote will enable Australia's First People to be heard on matters that affect them, and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to have an equal place at every table. This could make an enormous difference for future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and will ultimately benefit Australia.

In 2023, let's be part of "a great movement in this country to include Aboriginal people in the Constitution and a permanent body to Parliament". Vicki Walker, Muthi Muthi Nation Elder.

Let's not make decisions based on fear and the possibility of what might happen or go wrong. We manage now to deal with issues when they arise, and we know that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are asking for a Yes Vote. The people of Australia are being asked to vote from the place of love and justice, with open hearts, and a Yes vote, for most of us, will be a moment of grace – a true moment for Reconciliation.



Lizzie and Leith



Kenise



Bringing a Josephite Lens to Ecology by Mary-Ann Casanova rsj



Mary-Ann is a Sister of St Joseph whose PhD studies concentrated on ecology, spirituality and religion. Her presentation in June, for World Environment Day, explored the complex and universal problem of plastics from a position informed by *Laudato Si'* and the 'Explore Embrace Embody Action Plan' developed by the Australian Josephites in response to the Pope's letter.

2023 marks the 50th year of World Environment Day. The theme chosen for this year is *Solutions to Plastic Pollution*.

In the years since World Environment Day was first celebrated, human reliance on plastics has been both a blessing and a curse.

The United Nations reports that there was a tripling in the volume of plastics generated between 1970 and 1990. The volume has risen exponentially in subsequent decades.

While many forms of hard plastics, such as soft drink bottles, are relatively easy to recycle into pellets for remanufacture, statistics indicate that less than 10% of plastics are recycled globally.

Pope Francis wrote to each of us in 2015. He wrote that each of us can restore hope in the face of such problems.

What have been the 'take home' messages for you in his letter, Laudato Si'?

Our humble role is just as vital as that of the most creative chemical engineers and inventors. Pope Francis makes it clear that:

- Earth's crisis is of human-making,
- Being a person of faith comes with the 'moral imperative' to care for Earth and creation, and
- Ecological conversion is a non-negotiable.

The Australian Josephite response is the *Explore Embrace Embody Laudato Si' Action Plan*. This plan can be accessed through the '**Making a Difference**' tab (in the hamburger menu) on the Josephite website.



The plan is a call to action in three forms: contemplative action, community engagement and a call to advocacy.



Julian Tenison Woods, co-founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, was an environmentalist, scientist and priest. He provides us with a model for action, which is:

- **Contemplative Action**

Julian marvelled at the grandeur and variety in nature. He considered what he had seen in other places and invested time in eloquent descriptions and detailed drawings.

- **Community Engagement**

Julian sought facts, inquiring into the opinions and experience of those most affected, eg, sawyers, log splitters and fisherfolk, and he visited locations and saw for himself.

- **Advocacy**

Julian formed an opinion and balanced view between the rights of the poor to earn a living, the need for preservation, and a consideration of future generations. He humbly made recommendations to the relevant authorities and brought his concerns before the general public, eg, in *Letters to the Editor*.

The positive stance, promoted through World Environment Day, gives us an opportunity to applaud those among us who are working in ways to bring about solutions to the problem of plastics.

How can we get involved and join local projects?

One family business is turning plastic bottle lids into 'atoms' which are used in concrete replacing the stone aggregate.

What will you do?

How will you be a part of the *Solutions to Plastic Pollution*?

"I see God in the woods and mountains." JTW 1870

Who Are We?

by Fr Philip Marshall

Some years ago, I had a very strange experience. I was celebrating Mass in a parish early one cold winter morning. The congregation shuffled in, limping, coughing, and supported on sticks and frames. It was a gathering of the elderly and infirmed who had come to open their hearts to God. I looked at the congregation and felt some sadness to see what life had done to them.

During the Mass, something inexplicable and extraordinary happened. I can't quite describe or explain it. At one point, these people seemed all aflame with light. It was as if they had caught fire and each of them seemed extraordinarily beautiful. It only lasted a moment, but the memory of it has lasted forever. I think I glimpsed, in some strange way, the eternal truth of them. That beneath the infirmity, the ravages of age and the burden of years, there still existed that flaming beautiful self that God has known from all eternity and will love for all eternity.

It helped me see that this is true for all of us. There was a moment in our existence before we were hurt, before we were disappointed or damaged, when we existed unwounded and beautiful before God. And that self, the one that God knows, still exists within us. As the years pass, we cover our innocent, 'unwounded' self over with behaviours, protections, and disguises. But God still sees us.

I think this is deeply true, perhaps the deepest truth about us. I'd like to propose two things for your consideration.

Firstly, that we try to live and pray from that place within us. That, from time to time, we stop and remember who we truly are, underneath all the crust of our experience. And that we try to speak from that place, pray from that place, love toward each other from that place. This is something we can practise and it will grow with time.

Secondly, that we look deeply at each other and try to recognise that same place within everyone else we meet. To look below the crust that has developed over the years, and relate to the beautiful one within whom God sees clearly and whom by grace we can also glimpse. It will transform all of our relationships. Read the gospels carefully and you can see how completely this shaped every encounter Jesus had with others.

Who are we? We are sparks created by the Living God, destined to shine now and for all eternity.



International Josephite Companions Webinar *Walking Together – Honouring our History – Enriching our Future*

Saturday 2nd September 2023
11am SA

Guest Speaker – Judith Mary Geddes rsj

Mary MacKillop's sister Annie accompanied Mary and the Sisters over many years. As Josephite Companions we have decided to adopt Annie as our inaugural Companion! Further information will appear in our JCoLT newsletter emailed out at the end of July.

Register by Monday 28th August 2023: 0417 871 904 or SA.Companions@sosj.org.au

Our Josephite Partners

Living in the Spirit of Mary MacKillop

- **St Joseph's Old Scholars Association**

An Old Scholar is anyone (female or male) who has ever been connected to a Josephite school or college in Australia, as a student or teacher. Our Association has been in existence for over one hundred years.

Lack of bookings forced us to cancel our Fashion Parade in April.

We are looking for a big crowd for our other event this year:

- **Spring Luncheon**

Wednesday 25th October, Lockleys Hotel, 12pm

Seniors' Menu, raffle and more!

More information in our next newsletter. Keep the date free.

- **Mary MacKillop Old Scholars Association**

The Association continues the friendships and encourages the building of life-long networks amongst past students and staff. It also fosters justice and compassion, hospitality and concern for those in need and has a special relationship with the Sisters of St Joseph.

The Annual Reunion Dinner will be on Friday 27th October at 6.30pm. Prior to this there will be a College Tour on the day at 4.30pm. Everyone is always very welcome to join in and connect with other Old Scholars.

Our popular Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/179768134304>) keeps people in touch with each other. Make contact and share your news.

- **Mary MacKillop Precinct – Museum, Chapel and Bethany**

- Museum and Gift Shop – open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 4pm

The Museum tells the South Australian stories of some of the early companions of Mary MacKillop, and the history and legacy of the Josephites.

The Gift Shop has many products available for sale including the monthly *Southern Cross* magazine, books, cards and much more!

Orders and information: www.marymackillopadelaide.org.au or 8130 5910

- St Joseph's Chapel – open every day, 10am to 4pm

A place for quiet reflection and prayer. A place where Mary MacKillop herself prayed!

- Bethany Centre

Check out the *2023 Events Programme* which offers workshops, reflection and retreat days. Details online through www.marymackillopadelaide.org.au or collect a copy when visiting the Museum.

- Spotlight on Mary MacKillop

Continues each 8th of the month (except August – see below) from 10am to 12pm. Join us in Bethany for opportunities to enrich our appreciation of Mary's story and legacy. All are welcome!

No registration/no cost. Enquiries: infos@sosj.org.au or 8130 5900

- Feast of Mary MacKillop – Tuesday 8th August

There will be a celebration of the Eucharist at 10am in St Joseph's Chapel followed by refreshments in Bethany.

No registration/no cost.

WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS



This is part of a Novena inviting us to reflect on various qualities of St Joseph and to give thanks for all those who walk the Josephite way, supporting the Josephite vision.

Introduction

We give thanks for those who strive to protect the vulnerable – God’s people, God’s creation.
We are mindful of St Joseph, always watchful, who, with fatherly eyes, protected Mary and Jesus.

Gospel: Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God proves true. God is a shield to all who come to God for protection.

From the Pen of our Co-founders

I cannot forget that there is a dear good God watching over us. *MMK 1871*

Be kind to all, be gentle to all, be very, very gentle. *JTW*

Reflection

As you ponder the words from the Book of Proverbs and the writings of Mary and Julian, what touches your heart?

How is the mystery of God’s mission unfolding in your life?

To what does this call me today?

Prayer

United with all who protect the vulnerable, we pray:

We give thanks for God’s generosity
in calling the Sisters of St Joseph into being.

For Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods
the first Sisters, the children in schools
the families around them
the friends supporting them.

For the vision, energy and legacy they left.

We give thanks for the Josephite spirit in God’s mission
for the women who heeded the call
the people who supported the mission
the families who welcomed the Sisters.
For the love and healing in our parishes.

Join with us, all who have gone before
walking the Josephite way
supporting the Josephite vision
drawn into Josephite communion.
Join us in praising God’s abounding kindness.

Amen



Adapted from ‘Nine Days of Thanksgiving’