



## Josephite Companions Aotearoa

Nga hoa pumau o Hato Hohepa ki Aotearoa  
Friendship # Prayer # Service

December 2023

Greetings to you all.

Currently we are aware of the terrible suffering of the peoples of Palestine, Israel and Ukraine. Every day there is more depressing news... and this is interlinked with the pressing problem of climate change. It is very hard to be hope filled. And yet, this is what the season of Advent and Christmas calls us to. When we feel most disempowered, it can be very powerful to take a small action to advance our values. An invitation to do this lies in the quote:

***“Savouring a pleasant moment is a radical act”.***

It is an act of resistance in the face of all this adversity to look, even momentarily, for the very small daily actions, the gifts of life, which enable us to be grateful. It invites us to foster an open heart willing to spread reassurance and peace, and to steadfastly hold on to a glimmer of hope.

May you be blessed with a peace-filled heart this Christmas tide.

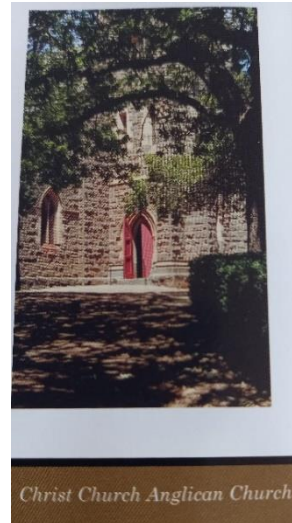
Marie Skidmore rsj

### From Penola to Gisborne with Love

When former Gisbornite, Lynda Fitzgerald, visited Melbourne earlier this month, she and her husband, Derek, decided to make the 426 km up the south-eastern coast to Penola, in a special trip to member long-time Gisborne friends, Sister Marie Hogan and Tracy Robinson. Though Lynda is not a Catholic, she had learned of the significance of Mary MacKillop in the life of Sister Marie and Tracy and felt visiting the place where Mary's journey started was worth the 5- hour drive.

Lynda found a small town with a huge commitment to remembering Mary, who they regard as a “Saint for all Australians.” Luckily Lynda knew of Mary's connections to NZ!!

Penola recognise this is where the story of the Josephites began and where is lives on. The story actually evolves over a triangle of 3 different towns in the area: Penola to Hamilton to Portland where they have preserved 16 different sites connected to Mary. One of these is Christ Church Anglican church that houses an icon encased in silver of Mary, believed to be the first representation of Mary in any Anglican church in the world.



Christ Church Anglican Church

The church in Portland was build the year Mary arrived in the small town in 1862 and is where Mary was a sacristan while she worked as a governess. It now features a stained-glass window of a young Mary MacKillop, in her honour.



A little further away in Hamilton, St Mary's Catholic Church pays homage to Alexander (Mary's father). Alexander died suddenly, aged 56, in 1868. His funeral took place in this church and his grave is located on a prominent corner in the Catholic section of the cemetery.

Thank you, Lynda, for remembering Sister Marie who was a friend to many of us, including you.



Tracy Robinson is pictured reading the brochure about Penola.

# FOCUS ON JULIAN

Prepared by Helen Dougherty

The Naracoorte caves in South Australia are a World Heritage site, home to a wealth of ancient fossils spanning a timeframe of over half a million years. It was Fr Julian Tenison Woods, ever the inquisitive observer who was the first to undertake a scientific investigation within the caves, finding the first fossils. Julian undertook many scientific expeditions, during which he experienced mystery and awe. He wrote about the wonder of these places where he found the silence of God.

**“About twenty-five miles north of Penola in the midst of a swampy, sandy country, plentifully covered with stringy bark, a series of caves is found whose internal beauty is at strange variance with the wilderness of the scenery round... Descending...one gets a glimpse of the magnificence enshrined below...all around, above and below, the eye is bewildered by a profusion of ornaments and decorations of nature’s own devising. It is like an immense Gothic Cathedral.”** (Julian Tenison Woods: Geographical Observations 1862)  
(The Naracoorte Caves)

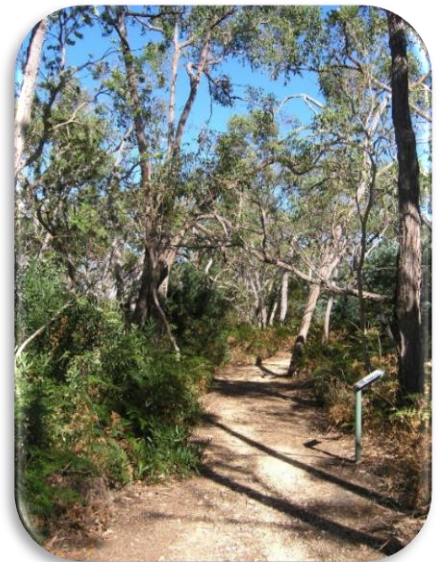


Our lives can be extremely busy and active, especially in the lead up to Christmas. Try to take heed of the ordinary around you. Allow yourself the opportunity, like Julian, to choose and experience silence; to find God at the centre of your life.

**“The presence of God does not consist in thinking of God but in a sense of the presence of God in every occupation.”** (Julian Tenison Woods: Book of Instructions 1877)

Julian faced many trials and tribulations in his life. Things did not always go as he expected. Our lives too often take unexpected paths and turns. This is not always easy, in fact it can be incredibly stressful. Yet we find that where one door closes, another opens. Peace is found when we truly let go and let God. Therein lies the challenge!

**“Be of good heart, God is infinitely good... loving and waiting, willing to carry you when you ask. But don’t be afraid, when you see God stepping over great precipices, that you are going to fall or that the way is not known. And when it is steep, and long, and strange, and perilous, and there seems a much better way close by, don’t doubt but that the divine way is the best way. It is true, God’s ways are not our ways, but if we look closer into it we see that God is the Way, just as God is the Truth and the Life.”** (Julian Tenison Woods: Paraphrase of a Letter to the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration 1885)



**RIP**

Deepest sympathy to Margaret Erskine-Shaw and her daughter Kathy Ellery on the recent death of their loved husband and father Anthony Erskine-Shaw.

The next newsletter and prayer sheet will be distributed at the beginning of March. If you have a change of address or any copy for the next issue, please contact Catherine Birt at P.O. Box 830 Whangaparaoa 0949 or [crbirt@gmail.com](mailto:crbirt@gmail.com) or phone 027 294 785



Thanks to Tracy Robinson for the Advent prayer sheet this time.