



Brigidine Focus

**A Newsletter of the Brigidine Sisters
Ireland, England, Wales, United States,
Australia, New Zealand, Kenya**

(For private circulation)

"Let us go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are." Phil 3:16

DECEMBER 2015



Source of photograph unknown

**"You will know when it is time to bring to birth the new creation.
The signs will be all around you, urging, insisting: now is the time.**

**You have to know just when to bear down and concentrate on one thing only.
It takes labour, hard, hard labour to bring to birth something new."**

(Miriam Therese Winter - A Psalm for Midwives)



Message From The Congregational Leadership Team

As we approach Christmas we see different images of Jesus, the child, entering into the human story. What is our response to these images? For years I thought of the Christmas story as an ‘inbreaking’ of the God of love into a specific time, place and culture in our human story. There was an acceptance in faith that Jesus was both divine and human and that this was a profound Mystery.

Now pondering the incarnation of God’s love in Jesus with the insights of evolutionary theology, I marvel at the depths of the words “*the Word became flesh and lived among us!*” (Jn 1:14). Jesus became flesh. He actually shared in the biological ancestry of all life, not only human life, for as science has demonstrated, there is common DNA in all life forms. That the enfleshed Jesus shared life, not only with humans, but with all organisms in the community of life, is awe-inspiring. This is indeed Mystery and an unfolding of the deep meaning of the revelation that “*God so loved the world.*” (Jn 3:16). We are learning to appreciate more and more that God’s revelation is on-going, not static, and when it comes to reflecting on the incarnation, we are led by recent popes and some theologians to re-imagine our understandings.

“The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God, not only of human nature, but in this human nature, in a sense, everything that is ‘flesh’: the whole humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation then has cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension.” (Pope John Paul II, *Lord and Giver of Life* 50)

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis uses arresting language to describe Jesus ‘becoming flesh’:

“The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter”. (236)

The theologian, Elizabeth Johnston, writes in *Ask the Beasts*:

“The incarnation, a densely specific expression of the love of God already poured out in creation, confers a new nearness to God on the whole of earthly reality, on all Earth’s creatures, on plants and animals, and on the cosmos in which planet Earth dynamically exists.” (p.198)

These insights bring a new and deeper dimension to our appreciation of the Christmas story. We are being called to look beneath the sometimes saccharine images of the newborn Christ in a humble stable, and grasp the immense gift of oneness that we share with him who became flesh and lived among us.

However, we cannot just stay pondering the esoteric world of theology. We also recall that the Christ became flesh for a purpose. One particular human, who shared both our God-life and humanity, entered our story at a particular time, bringing hope to an oppressed people. The Galilean teacher did not belong to the higher echelons of society, but he made his mark for all time. His words and actions spoke powerfully, and pricked the consciousness of the religious leaders of his time. His life and his teaching demonstrated a way of being in the world that ran counter to imperial domination and exclusions of that time in Palestine, bringing hope to the downcast. In encounter after encounter, the Christ touched people’s lives and transformed them forever.

The memory, the actions and the teachings of the one who became flesh, is the





Message From The Congregational Leadership Team

legacy with which we, as Christians living in the twenty-first century, have been entrusted. We are also challenged to stand in solidarity with those with whom we share the same DNA - the human and God's entire creation.

As we read some of the articles in this edition of Focus, we are offered a window on to ways in which some in Brigidine circles, and others with whom we share the same passion to be 'on the periphery where there is need', try to en flesh the Christian message in our time. There are so many possibilities. Some articles offer a view from the macro level - working to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals which could potentially improve the quality of life for all species. Other articles explore ways in which people are addressing the inhumanity resulting in streams of asylum seekers having to leave their lands. Still another article invites us to consider life in the Church and the call for true dialogue, advocating for women's recognition and equality. We read also of experiences where Brigidines, our colleagues and associates have seized the transformative moments in various encounters. Fundamentally, we all know that what matters is the way we meet, greet and reach out to others - our humanity meets in the ordinary events of life. I was recently reminded of this when a young, vulnerable and exploited woman, with tears shining in her eyes, told me, that after several meetings with a skilled support person, *"I have come to realise how capable I am and what I can achieve. I am not rubbish."*

**May the coming celebration of the Christ among us,
and the still small voice of love within each of us,
give birth to hope for all in the community of life.
Christmas blessings!**

Louise O'Leary

Mary Hattery

Kathleen Butler

Claire Griffin

Congregational Leadership Team



Cosmic Birth, Mary Southard

This year, the Congregational Leadership Team is making a donation on behalf of all Brigidines, to programs working to resettle Syrian refugees in various areas, in lieu of the cost of purchasing and posting Christmas cards to Brigidines, our associates and colleagues around the world. May this small gesture help bring hope to birth in our world today.



**This Graced
Moment:**

**Divine Energy
animating
fresh
possibilities**

We ask all our
associates,
colleagues and
co-workers to pray
with and for us
as we continue
to prepare for the
2016
Congregational
Forum in Tullow

May 15 - 31, 2016

Brigidine Life and Mission Unfolding

**“As Earth makes fresh things grow;
as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will God’s integrity and justice spring forth.”**

Isaiah 61:11



Throughout the last six - eight months of 2015, Community Leadership Teams have been ably co-ordinating activities in our three Communities and engaging sisters in the initial preparation work of the 2016 Congregational Forum.

Together we have:

- Spent time reviewing and reflecting on our 2011 Forum Directions and ways in which these are integrated in our living.
- Become more aware of some of our current Brigidine realities.
- Made opportunities for reading, reflection and discussion to deepen our awareness of the world in which we live and minister.
- Engaged in meetings and processes of both personal and communal discernment leading to the election of delegates.

**We thank each of the Community Leadership Teams for their planning
and co-ordination of this phase of preparations.**

FEBRUARY 2016 - MAY 2016

(Delegates will plan and facilitate this phase of preparations for the Forum)

1. **Deepening discussion on critical questions for our future as a Congregation with a mission.** → Drawing on the fruits of previous meetings, delegates will prepare a summary of critical questions and share these within each Community.
2. **Building a picture of the critical questions surfacing across the whole Congregation** → Insights will be shared across our three Communities; delegates will prepare a summary of their Community’s response to the critical questions arising across the whole Congregation.
3. **Gleaning wisdom on Congregational matters** → Receiving and reflecting on reports from the CLT, Resources Task Group, Spirituality Enrichment Task Groups



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2015 and Beyond

1 NO POVERTY



Goal 1: Extreme poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 1990. While this is a remarkable achievement, we must strive to end poverty everywhere.

2 ZERO HUNGER



Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition sustainable agriculture. A profound change of the global food and agriculture system is needed if we are to nourish today's 795 million hungry and growing populations.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Goal 3: Ensuring the healthy lives and promoting the wellbeing of all ages is essential to sustainable development. More efforts are needed to ensure the eradication of a wide range of diseases and address emerging health issues.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote life long learning. Greater efforts are needed to ensure universal education.

5 GENDER EQUALITY



Goal 5: Women and girls still suffer violence and discrimination in every part of the world. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is still to be achieved.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Goal 6: Access to clean water and sanitation is essential for all. There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this yet each year millions, mostly children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water and sanitation.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. Sustainable energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity the world faces today.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The creation of quality jobs will remain a major challenge for almost all economies into the future.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Goal 9: Building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation are crucial to achieving sustainable development and empowering communities everywhere.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Goal 10: Reducing inequality within and among nations remains a challenge. Large disparities still remain in access to health, education and other services and must be addressed.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Goal 11: Challenges exist in maintaining cities in a way that continues to create jobs and prosperity while not straining land and resources. Future cities must include opportunities for all and access for all.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production will aim at "doing more with less", reducing resource use, degradation and pollution while increasing the quality of life.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



Goal 13: Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. Urgent action is required to address climate change and its significant and costly impacts.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Goal 14: The world's oceans - their life, currents, temperature and chemistry drive global systems that make Earth habitable for humans and other species. This calls for careful management.

15 LIFE ON LAND



Goal 15: Deforestation and desertification – caused by human activities and climate change – pose challenges to sustainable development and have affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Goal 16: The promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all and building accountable and effective institutions at all levels is significant for a sustainable future.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Goal 17: Partnerships based on a shared vision and values are required at all levels between governments, the private sector and civil societies. Everyone has a part to play.

- What **critical questions** do these goals raise for Brigidines, our associates and our colleagues now and for the immediate future?
- What **action might we be called to take** in response to these challenges?



UNANIMA International Annual Report 2015

Our 2015 meetings were held in challenging times: the March meeting in the icy grip of the polar vortex (deep snow, freezing cold and slippery surfaces everywhere) and in September, New York's excitement as the city played host to Pope Francis (warm, engaging and giving us challenging messages for now). In both cases, the challenges did not deter the board members from the important task of coming together to pray, learn and make decisions which can carry forward UI's vision to contribute to human dignity, the care of the planet and to work for structural change at the grassroots and at the UN. Board members desire to promote action in ways that will benefit all women, children and men, particularly the poor and most marginalised in every country.



Brigidine Sister, Jane Keogh csb assists Nabila with her English

At the March AGM meeting our UI Coordinator, Michele Morek OSU, invited us to consider: how can YOU evaluate the effectiveness of bringing the voices of your congregations to the UN? And if YOU could do one thing, what would it be? One highlight of the March meeting was an exposition of the Bhakita Project (a sister initiative of US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking) and Talitha Kum (the anti-trafficking initiative for the UISG). Members shared some of the recognised ways in which women are trafficked in the USA, and elsewhere. Sex trafficking is usually the major oppression of women that first comes to mind, yet increasingly women are held or imported for servile labour as domestic servants, in nail and massage parlours, restaurants and hotels. In all of these cases, trafficking takes place in a restricted environment, and when women and men are **poor**

– in resources, in language and education, skills for employment, and the awareness of their human rights in the USA, or other countries. The NGO September 2015 figure for trafficking in persons is 29 million worldwide.

Ruchira Gupta, an Indian anti-trafficking activist and founder of APNE AAP (meaning “self-empowerment”) reminded those present of her address at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Day in March 2015 that poor women and women in prostitution and forced labour have dreams, similar to other women. They dream of education for themselves and their children, a room of their own, a job such as an office job, and justice where they feel protected and where others are accountable for **their** actions towards them. APNE AAP works to fulfil these dreams. UNANIMA International also “tapped into” human dignity and women's human rights in its presentation at the CSW, where a maximum capacity audience listened to three brave women tell their stories of violence, oppression or human trafficking and finally, freedom and a way forward through helping others. Brigidine women remembered trafficked persons on 17 May and prayed that governments and law makers put in place anti-trafficking prohibitions, legislation and support for the victims of human trafficking.



UI Board Members at the Spring 2015 Meeting

Michele has kept congregations informed about her and her associates' activities the UN and in NGO forums in detailed Updates circulated monthly. Tori Larson, the UI secretary, is a passionate advocate for the empowerment of girls and attends all NGO and UN forums on this theme. Celia Martin keeps a sharp eye on mining and environmental issues. The Updates also present “flashpoints” on the global activities of different congregations which link to UI's principles and interests.



UNANIMA International Annual Report 2015

In her September report Michele noted her three all-consuming activities in 2015: the Run Hilton grant, negotiations around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) - and moving the UI office to a new location! She emphasised the importance of the ongoing battle for clean water (Michele is zealous about this human right!) and with it, the harsh fact for most of us reading this report that one billion people globally do not have access to a toilet. Access to a clean toilet, proper hygiene practices which often need to be taught, along with safe drinking water, make up one of the key SDG goals for reduction of infant mortality (in our world, every 2.5 minutes a child under four dies of a diarrheal disease), empowerment of girls who no longer have to walk long distances to carry water and can attend school, while village mothers are “water women” in households or communities. Brigidines, their friends and associates contributed generously in September 2015 to *Water with Blessings*, a programme which trains women to use simple apparatus making water clean, disease free and drinkable.



SND Sisters in Vietnam

Board members welcomed the Sisters of Notre Dame (founded 1850 at Coesfeld, Germany) to UI at the September meeting. The Congregation has 2200 members, ministers in 19 countries and has 600 associates. It is exciting to welcome new members and as Sister Kristin Battles SND said in her application to UI: “Together is better.” There is “a texture” to UNANIMA International: it is, for me, a modern expression of the gospels. Women of similar hope-filled vision bring enthusiasm to large and small issues facing their home contexts and the UN. As 2016 approaches we will have enough to

engage us all: the outcomes of the Climate Change Conference in Paris at the end of 2015, focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the 2016 60th Session of the CSW with its priority theme “*Women’s Empowerment and Its Link to Sustainable Development*”.

We will be busy – reading, reflecting and actioning what we can to “wake up the world”. Yes, together is better!

Kathleen Butler csb

UI Board Member



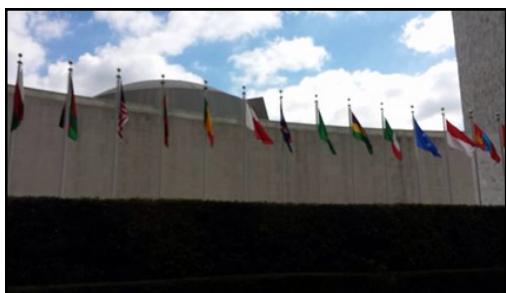
Together is better - Uganda



UNANIMA Board Chair Stacy Hanrahan **CND**, Coalition Coordinator Michele Morek **OSU**, and some other UNANIMA community representatives (e.g. **SNJM**) will attend the *UN Climate Change Conference* in Paris from November 30 to December 11 2015.

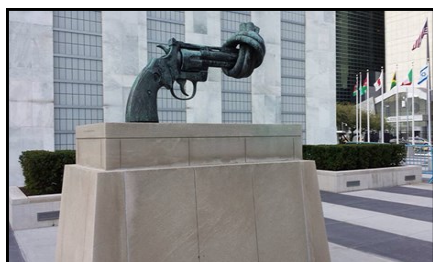


A Visit to UNANIMA International - October 2015



Arriving for two weeks at the United Nations in New York was something akin to being overwhelmed by walking into an extended family gathering. The family gathers to tell their story and account for their activities. The flags flapping at the entrance were the introduction to table conversations of a big family - sometimes at peace with each other, other times arguing across the table, always with the adult at the head of the table calming the emotions and directing the talk.

Over the time I attended a number of NGO meetings. Each day typically involved two meetings of around three hours. What struck me was the critical mass of men and women religious - often in their 70s - who were committed to advocating on issues of world wide importance. Many of these religious often attended the same NGO groups and so knew each other's mission. They had done their homework. They had immersed themselves in the relevant world issues and research and were under no illusions that being at the table of the UN is a chance that must not be squandered. There were so many position papers, many alliances and many practical steps and stages to their purpose. Their preparation for those times when they would meet with UN delegates and present their positions was meticulous. These people know how to lobby and advocate!



Another of my observations was the importance of the space provided by the UN for countries that are in conflict with each other. For example Palestine and Israel made points and counter points, as did Japan and Korea. These countries raised objections against each other's treatment of groups of people in possibly one of the few places in the world where there are no guns or violence - however plenty of point scoring.

The Third Committee at the UN deals with human rights and social development. The meetings I attended on these issues had countries report on their work regarding justice for women, security, violence. At other times, meetings reported on progress being made by countries working to address poverty, child sexual exploitation and child pornography.

What struck me was each country's pledge to address these issues but also their admissions that there was still a long way to go in resolving the named issues.

My main goal in visiting UNANIMA International during my time of sabbatical from teaching at Victoria University was to experience its work. This I did! Michele Morek, OSU, UI Coalition Co-ordinator, Cec Martin and Tori Larson were really welcoming and patient in their explanations and directions. I was very proud that Brigidines are part of this work.

Fortunately, between the meetings I did get some brief time for sightseeing! Visits to the Guggenheim Museum and to Statten Island were on my 'to do' list, as was sharing a meal with other Melbournians, Angela Reed rsm, Cec Martin, a Sion Sister and Christine Carolan (Executive Officer - ACRATH) who were also visiting New York. It was great to have time with these 'Aussies' and to think how such experiences can be translated in the Australian context – watch this space!

Doris Testa csb



A Statement from Twelve Irish Priests on Women's Equality in Church

Priests call for open discussion on the need for equality of women in all aspects of Church life, including ministry. ***“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.*** (Gal. 3, 28)

In the Catholic Church women, despite being equal to men by virtue of their Baptism, are excluded from all positions of decision making, and from ordained ministry. In 1994 Pope John Paul II declared that the exclusion of women from priesthood could not even be discussed in the Church. Pope Benedict reaffirmed, and even strengthened this teaching by insisting that it was definitive and that all Catholics were required to give assent to this view. Pope Francis has said that Pope John Paul II had reflected at length on this matter, had declared that women could never be priests and that, therefore, no further discussion on the ordination of women to ministry is possible. In reality, Pope John Paul II did not encourage or facilitate debate on the ordination of women to priesthood or diaconate before he made his decision. Furthermore, there was virtually no discussion on the complex cultural factors which excluded women from leadership roles in many societies until recently.

We, the undersigned, believe that this situation is very damaging, that it alienates both women and men from the Church because they are scandalised by the unwillingness of Church leaders to open the debate on the role of women in our church. This alienation will continue and accelerate. We are aware that there are many women who are deeply hurt and saddened by this teaching. We also believe that the example given by the Church in discriminating against women encourages and reinforces abuse and violence against women in many cultures and societies. It is also necessary to remember that women form the bulk of the congregation at Sunday Mass and have been more active in the life of the local churches than many men, mirroring the fidelity of the women who followed Jesus to the end, to his death on Calvary. The command of Jesus “Go, teach all nations” was addressed to all his followers, and by failing to accept the full equality of women, the church is not fulfilling this commission. The strict prohibition on discussing the question has failed to silence the majority of the Catholic faithful. Survey after survey indicates that a great many people are in favour of full equality for women in the Church. But it has managed to silence priests and bishops, because the sanctions being imposed on those who dare to raise the question are swift and severe.

We believe that we can no longer remain silent because to do so colludes with the systemic oppression of women within the Catholic Church. So, in the spirit of Pope Francis’ constant encouragement of dialogue, we are calling for free and open discussion concerning the full equality of women in all facets of Church life, including all forms of ministry. If this were to happen, the credibility of the Catholic Church would gain strength especially when it addresses women’s issues.

Signed: Frs:
Eamonn McCarthy
Kevin Hegarty
Roy Donovan
Padraig Standun
Adrian Egan
Benny Bohan
Sean McDonagh
John D. Kirwin
Ned Quinn
Donagh O’Meara
Tony Conry
Tony Flannery

As Brigidines, we are members of
the living Church, engaged with
the new which is emerging....



At our last Congregational Forum we were called to stand in solidarity with those wrestling with current issues in the Church, and in this way contribute to a deeper living of the Gospel message. (Refer 2011 Congregation Forum Booklet, p17)

- In what specific ways can we continue to use our capacity and/or influence to bring about positive change and partner with others in seeking ways to respond to the one baptismal call to ministry?
- Where are we now being called to be catalysts for “grass roots” renewal of the Church?



When I first think of *soil*, whether it is simply *dirt* or *earth*, it is as something almost magical - it is the dark, pungent substance into which seeds are planted and in most cases, develop into tiny shoots which eventually flourish with great profusion in our gardens. It is a substance indeed, which nurtures and promotes growth of various kinds. At first sight it can seem as though it is simply that - dirt. But with a little patience and some further sight, we catch a glimpse of its subtle movement, and become aware of the millions of microbes contained therein.

At times it may be a substance that is readily productive and easy to work with; at other times a substance that may require harder work in breaking it up, to dig a hole or a furrow; and there are those times when something needs to be added to it, to soften its texture and make it more malleable in our hands. Whatever the process by which we make contact with it, soil can be perceived as something very positive in our human lives. Even in a figurative and symbolic sense *soil* has come to have a positive press over the centuries in both religious thinking and literature. In the myth of creation in Genesis, for instance, the author describes the Creator as making all living creatures from the soil of Earth:

Then God said: 'Earth: bring forth all kinds of living soul - cattle, things that crawl and wild animals of all kinds.... And God saw that it was good'.¹

The Christian parable about seeds being planted in various types of *soil*, suggests that it has to do with personal growth and character development.² We speak almost romantically about those who eke a living from agriculture and farming as *daughters and sons of the soil*. Traditionally the Christian funeral ritual emphasised that *from the dust we came and to dust we return*, underlining the positive side of our interconnectedness with Earth. And yet there are words and phrases in our language, related to *soil* that are far from positive in their connotation. Words like *soiled* and *soil* and *sullied* and *dirty* come to mind in this context: meaning to make something or somebody dirty or stained in some way, even to bring dishonour on or

to damage someone's reputation. Again, religion, art and literature have not been slow to use these words to convey lack of moral standards, general immorality and even sinfulness. Think for a moment of the way we still refer to *dirty* thoughts, *dirty* language, *dirty* dancing, even the proverbial *dirty* weekend! Then there are the *dirty* secrets, *dirty* jokes, the *dirty* looks, the *dirty* linen and even the act of *doing the dirty* on someone. Somehow *dirt* has found its way into our lexicon for sexuality and betrayal of trust.

How do we reconcile this wonderful variety in our common usage of the English language? Research into the etymology of the word *soil* suggests that it has been a gradual evolution from about the early 13th Century, when the old French verb *soillier* (modern French *souillier*) meaning *to splatter with mud*, came to mean *defile or pollute with sin*.³ It doesn't take too much imagination to envisage those of the upper classes in 13th century Europe, looking askance as the mud from the carriages on the roads bespatters their finery! And the image is easily transposed into the resultant theological insights about soul pollution in terms of sin, that Christianity seems to have inherited!

So it leaves me wondering why our forebears, who were largely an agrarian people, were so ready to cast aside the deeply nurturing and spiritual meanings for *soil*, and to allow the more negative meanings to survive and even develop further into the 21st Century.

The most exciting aspect of all this is that both meanings have persisted until the present. Like plants and all living things, language too has a life of its own, and given the right conditions, it grows and develops with each generation. What must be exceedingly difficult for novices to the English language, is the ability to comprehend and balance the use of the various meanings. But this is essentially true of most languages and it underlines the wonderful versatility and flexibility of language itself.

What is more to the point here though is to come to reflect anew on those positive aspects of the *soil* that we touch in our gardens - to restore *earth* and *dirt* and *soil* to their rightful place in our lives. In



Soil As Sacred Source

the words of Wendell Berry, the contemporary American poet, environmental activist and novelist, we can certainly learn to appreciate some of the great richness that soil offers to us, even today:

*The soil is the great connector of lives,
the source and destination of all.
It is the healer and restorer
and resurrector,
by which disease passes into health,
age into youth, death into life.
Without proper care for it we can have
no community,
because without proper care for it
we have no life. 4*

This is certainly a far cry from regarding *soil* as simply a piece of dirt on Earth's surface. It raises it to the level of being a vital ingredient in our humanity's very survival. It merits far more of my respect than I had first thought. I have much to learn from those who know and understand its promise and inner depths.

Catriona Devlin csb

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2. Matt 13:1-9, *The Inclusive Bible*, Sheed and Ward Books, 2007
3. Online Etymology Dictionary,
<http://www.etymonline.com>
4. Wendell Berry: *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, Sierra Club Books, 1996, p.86.

(Catriona is a Brigidine Sister and Co-ordinator of the Brigid's Well program for adult learners at Kildara Centre, Malvern, Victoria.)

This article was first published in the Spring 2015 edition of the EarthSong Journal - to subscribe online contact <http://earthsong.org.au>.





Kildare Ministry Pilgrimage to Ireland

*"Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
That always seems about to give in
Something that will not acknowledge conclusion
Insists that we forever begin."* (Brendan Kennelly)

Profound experiences are difficult to describe and difficult to express in language and imagery that communicate the depth and breadth of the journey. The inaugural Kildare Ministries' Pilgrimage was one of those experiences. It captured the hearts and imaginations of twenty-three pilgrims as they travelled through Ireland from 19 Sep – 3 Oct 2015. On most days we felt we were gifted with a small piece of the rich and vibrant Celtic story essential in understanding who the Irish people are and in appreciating their own distinct expression of Christianity which has maintained its connections to ancient Ireland and the landscape.

The traditional heritage stories unfolded in three stages. Firstly, we visited the West of Ireland and explored the early Christian world in Clonmacnoise and Inis Mor. Often wet and windy, we learned about monastic civilisations established around the sixth century, visited the ruins of cathedrals and towers and read the ancient history deeply and skilfully engraved in the high crosses. The more adventurous amongst us joined millions of pilgrims before them to climb the holiest mountain in Ireland, Croagh Patrick and to pay homage to St. Patrick, while others visited the rich valley below.

Many enjoyed the days where we traced the steps of Nano Nagle, visiting her home town of Ballygriffin as well as the places where her legacy lives on in Cork. Inspirational speakers from the Lantern Community Project moved some to tears as they generously shared their life stories. We met Johnny whom we will never forget! *"An open hand and a kind word, that is what spirituality is really about"*, is how Johnny spoke of his encounters with God. Remarkable coming from a man so desperate after losing everything that ever meant anything to him, then found Nano's voice to guide and protect him as he pieced his life together over eight years.

Tullow, Paddock and Kildare engulfed us in the mystical and ethereal worlds of St. Brigid and the visionary leadership of Daniel Delany.

Solas Bhride and St. Brigid's Garden were spiritual places which provided wonderful environments where we could explore the earthly and heavenly connections through poetry, sculpture and exquisite gardens. Indeed Celtic spirituality has something to say to us today and we were not surprised to learn that there is a renewed interest in drawing from this ancient spirituality to help us respond to current issues around our environment and caring for our earth; life's cycles expressed through the seasons and the influence of the cosmos to nurture our hearts and souls.

The symbolic planting of the sapling oak tree by the three Trustees at Solas Bhride for the hope and prosperity of Kildare Ministries began to focus our attention on what we are called to do and be in our world and for our Church today. We began to contemplate questions about our relevance and mission. Kildare Ministries is more than simply a governance structure for our schools and community works. More importantly, it is about the people within it who make up the communities and how they give expression to their faith that will become the hallmarks of Kildare Ministries. Pilgrims began to express a desire to bring our traditions and our founders to life not through passively honouring their stories, but in responding actively to needs here and now. It was a perfect note to end on: twenty-three pilgrims searching and reflecting on their role in the Church today and how best to give a voice to the marginalised!

No matter from which perspective one might view it, the pilgrimage was a great success. The food, accommodation and travel were all faultless. The 15 guest speakers were all relevant, dynamic, interesting and challenging. The warm and bountiful hospitality of the Presentation and Brigidine Sisters left us feeling cared for and most welcomed. The organisation was excellent and the days were full and engaging. The liturgies, Masses and reflective moments were beautifully crafted and deeply thought out. But the most important ingredient was the group itself. The pilgrims were exceptional in their contribution and co-operation; in their support of each other and their commitment to the programme; in their sense of fun and moments of prayer, reflection and sharing. God was amongst us and she surprised us each day.

Erica Pegorer



Kildare Ministry Pilgrimage to Ireland





Global Women Religious Leader Asks Sisters to Do Synod's Unfinished Work

The leader of the umbrella group for some 600,000 global Catholic women religious has said that in the wake of the recent Synod of Bishops women are called to carry forth the pastoral work that the official church is sometimes not able to do.

Maltese Sr. Carmen Sammut, who participated in the Synod in October 2015, as one of 32 women who took part in non-voting roles alongside the 270 prelate-members, said women religious should engage with people church institutions may not even know need help.

"I think that we should not give up our role at the frontiers of the church," said Sammut, who heads the International Union of Superiors General (UISG).

"With the people who are needing the pastoral care and who get it very often not from the official church, but from us," she described their work, proposing that religious ask themselves: "How are we engaging with people the official church is not seeing?"

With publishing of the Synod's final document, Sammut said another question to ask is: "How can we make sure that this does not remain just dead letters, to say even to bishops and priests, 'How are we carrying this forward?'" "I think we can push some things," she said.

Sammut, who is also the general superior of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, was speaking at a public session with UISG members to give an overview of her experience serving as an auditor at the bishops' gathering. The session was titled: *"The Synod on the Family from a Back Bench."*

Auditors were allowed to attend and participate in the synod discussions but not to vote on the final document. Among the auditors at this synod were seventeen individuals and seventeen married couples. Thirteen of the individual auditors were women, including Sammut and two other religious sisters representing UISG. (The international sisters' group is a membership organization of about eighteen hundred leaders of the world's congregations of Catholic sisters and nuns).

Sammut spoke first about the process by which she and two other sisters were appointed as auditors, explaining that it did not come about easily. The woman religious said that her group had no official inclusion in the last Synod of Bishops, held in 2014. The UISG leader said she and group leaders addressed the issue first in a meeting with Vatican Secretariat of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, some months ago. They then also raised the issue in a meeting with Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, the head of the Vatican Synod office, before being invited.

"Don't think that it was automatic," Sammut told the women religious at the gathering about their participation. "We had to work for it."

A similar group representing male religious orders had ten representatives at the 2015 synod, who were full-voting members of the gathering. For the first time in the fifty years of the synod, one of those representatives was a non-priest: Br. Herve Janson of the Little Brothers of Jesus. Sammut mentioned Janson's role, saying: "This is the first time that there is a non-ordained person voting in a synod, so some things can change slowly."

The UISG leader also mentioned that she had an opportunity during the synod on to meet privately for a moment with Pope Francis. She said she asked the pontiff if he had received a number of letters her group had written to him that focused particularly on expressing their availability to provide input should the pope want to consider more deeply his expressed desire for greater roles for women in the church.

Francis, Sammut said, indicated he had not received the letters. The UISG leader then said she invited the pope to take part in her group's next triennial general assembly, taking place in May 2016.

The letter was handwritten in Spanish, with the envelope even addressed by the pope, who gave a return address of: "F., Casa Santa Marta, Citta del Vaticano."



Global Women Religious Leader Asks Sisters to Do Synod's Unfinished Work

Throughout the rest of her presentation, the UISG leader mostly recapped the three-week process of the synod for the women religious but also provided a number of anecdotal insights about what it was like behind the scenes. Sammut said one thing that was a "bit difficult" was following along to the bishops' interventions during the open sessions of the synod when each of the prelates had one opportunity to speak for three minutes. "The interventions were extremely different," said the woman religious. "You could hear one thing and then its opposite."

"It became a very frustrating and confused experience, and there was no way for me, who has lived all my 30 years of missionary experience outside the center of Rome in a very small and periphery church in North Africa to know who was thinking what," she said.

Sammut also said that the synod process did not allow for enough reflection or prayer time for prelates to consider the different points of view they were hearing. "For me, the weakness for this method was that there was no real time allowed for a real discernment process," said the woman religious. "When you have such very big differences, how do you bring all that together?" she asked.

The prelates needed "enough prayerful time to digest all that and to distinguish the movements of the Spirit and to speak not of what I desire personally ... but of what the Spirit seems to be saying to the church," she said.

The UISG leader also spoke of her experience taking part in one of the synod's 13 small discussion groups, which were broken up by language preference. The time in her group was "one of the best sharings" in the synod, she said.

"Within my group, all types of families were present, with their joys and the problems," said Sammut. "There was no ideal, perfect family out there."

"The image that came after that sharing was the Risen Christ showing us his wounds," she said. "I found it important for me to let my eyes of faith encounter the wounded and risen Christ in each of these families we were talking about."

"The most difficult discussions at the synod came when the prelates were considering questions such as how the church treats divorced and remarried persons", Sammut said. "During this part, I felt how difficult it is to be a bishop," she said. "I was sorry for bishops. It's the first time in my life I was sorry for bishops. They have to hold the doctrine of the church while attending to the pastoral needs of each person in their diocese," she continued, saying they want to "show the all-embracing face of God while still keeping to the discipline of the church."

"How do you become free enough to go beyond fear?" she asked of the bishops' considerations.

Divorced and remarried Catholics are currently prohibited from receiving Communion in the church unless they receive annulments of their first marriages.

While the final document released from the synod proposes such persons should discern decisions about their spiritual lives individually in concert with the guidance of priests, Sammut said the deliberations on the matter were difficult. "One thing that completely shocked me is that some people were talking about not opening the sacrament of penance to divorced and remarried," she said. "One of the reasons that was sometimes given ... is that the other Catholics will be scandalized if they see them going to Communion, or they see them admitted to the sacraments."

"What type of Christians, then, are we making of the good Christians?" Sammut asked. "How can a good Christian want to deprive others of what is important and necessary for another's life?"

(This article was written by Joshua J McElwee, NCR Vatican correspondent and first appeared on nronline.org)



RENAME Training for Transformation Ireland

In October, twenty-two members and three staff of RENAME Network (*Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation*) from nineteen countries across Europe assembled at All Hallows College, Dublin for a week of **'Training for Transformation'** - or as the trainers, Maureen Sheehy and Frank Naughton titled it, **'Working for and with Change'**. The programme includes processes and exercises on topics such as understanding culture, identity and culture, racism, culture and communication, cultural values, development interventions, power, languages and many other areas of intercultural work.

The anti-trafficking work of RENAME spans cultures, customs and languages. Meetings are conducted in English, with Spanish and German translations. Members advocated for training that would improve communication and understanding between them, so as to be more effective in their anti-trafficking work. It is hoped that the training programme will enable the Network to build confidence, competence and commitment within and between individual members and their networks, through a learning and action approach.

'Training for Transformation' has its origins in the innovative work of Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, who first began the process in East Africa in the 1970s as they shaped a comprehensive approach to enable people develop self-reliant communities. Five streams are based on the work of Paulo Freire the Brazilian educationalist (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*): education and liberation; human relations training in groups work; organisational development; social analysis; spiritual sources of inspiration. Recently RENAME undertook a Mapping Exercise on human trafficking, across 13 European countries. The data is available on www.rename-europe.net



During the week's program, RENAME members visited Solas Bhríde Centre and Hermitages and Brigid's Well at Kildare. According to comments, words and phrases summing up the experiences of the visit: 'inspirational', 'could not have been better', 'a spiritual moment', 'the spirit of St Brigid is very integrated into the centre', 'this visit has been a pleasure and a privilege', 'a great example of a sustainable building', 'a place of welcome and hospitality', 'thanks to Brigidines, I now know a lot more about Brigid, the Celtic saint' - the visit was a significant aspect of the week.



Thanks to Brigidine sisters Mary Minehan, Phil O'Shea, Rita Minehan and Kay Mulhall for their hospitality and inspirational reflections on Brigid's legacy and how it is being shared at Solas Bhríde.

Patricia Mulhall, csb

Speaking on 21 July 2015 to mayors from 70 cities around the world, Pope Francis urged them to put care of the environment and combatting human trafficking at the top of their agendas.



The **2015 UN Climate Change Conference**, will be held in Paris, from November 30 - December 11. The Conference objective is *to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, from all the nations of the world.*

Let us continue to lobby and pray for its success!



Celebrations in New Zealand and Kenya

On 6 September, Brigidine Sisters Trish Hanaray, Cyprian Wilson, Anne Phibbs, Ann Harrison and Monica Landy joined Helena Fouhy and Patsy Buckley in Pahiatua for the celebration of Patsy's Diamond Jubilee. The triple celebration of Patsy's Jubilee, Father's Day and a children's Mass were beautifully brought together by Father Bryan as examples of God's love. The children were angelic and their participation in the Mass and their singing was first-class which all added to the special occasion for Patsy who had spent many years as an excellent teacher. Patsy renewed her vows, supported by the Sisters, her family and the enthusiastic congregation of St Brigid's Church, Pahiatua.

Following the Mass a beautiful hot meal was enjoyed at the Lavender Farm by the Brigidines and Patsy's family, all of whom were delighted for her. The centrepiece in the dining room was the cake surrounded by tiers of 60 cup-cakes, each depicting something that was important to Patsy, a photo of Patsy (which was edible) and baskets of biscuits with St Brigid's crosses or the congregational symbol on them. The background to this was a montage of photographs showing Patsy's diverse ministries – in teaching and in her work in Kiritabi. The gathering was a truly happy occasion and a chance to express our gratitude to Patsy for all that she is to us.

Anne Phibbs csb



Sr. Patsy Buckley csb enjoying her Diamond Jubilee Celebration was joined by her six brothers



Patsy's Jubilee cake surrounded by the sixty cup-cakes



The Jubilee Mass was celebrated at St. Brigid's Church, Pahiatua

Loretta Brennan's incredible work at Tangaza College, Nairobi has been recognised by De Paul University, Chicago. On December 5, Loretta was awarded an Honorary Doctorate at the Graduation at Tangaza College. Margaret Hill, leader of the Victorian Brigidine Community travelled to Kenya to be present and to represent the Brigidines on this occasion. We congratulate and thank Loretta for her outstanding contribution to the education and life of the students and their families over many years.





Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project Education & Awareness Raising Sessions

1.



2.



3.



4.



On 22 October, the fourth session in the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project 2015 discussion nights was held at St. Joseph's Parish Hall in Port Melbourne. The evening was organized by Brigid Arthur csb and Libby Saunders who is employed by the Project, and chaired by Delia Bradshaw, Chairperson of the Project. Approximately one hundred people attended and found it to be a most stimulating and informative session. The guest speaker was Shahram Azbarzadeh, a Research Professor of Middle East and Central Asian Politics at Deakin University. He has an active research interest in Central Asia, Islam, Muslims in Australia and the Middle East. His topic for the evening was *"Understanding What's Happening in Syria"*.

During the second part of the evening, Brigid and Libby gave an update on some of the recent work of the Project. This included information about their work assisting asylum seekers gain the necessary legal support when applying for visas and helping new refugee families find suitable housing. We also heard of a recent happy event organized by Cecilia Merrigan csb and the Social Justice Group in the Echuca Parish who offered a weekend of hospitality to eleven refugee families. Following a train journey from Melbourne to Echuca, the families enjoyed a BBQ, a Riverboat Excursion on the Murray River and a picnic. All families involved had a great time and reported learning much from this event. Congratulations to all involved in the work of Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project and the many who support this work financially and in other ways. It is a wonderful response to the Gospel call: *"I was a stranger and you welcomed me."* (Matthew 25)

1. ***Delia Bradshaw (Chair of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers' Project), Brigid Arthur, csb and Research Professor Shahram Azbarzadeh (Guest Speaker at the October Education Session).***
2. ***Reba Woodwiss csb with Libby Saunders (Brigidine Asylum Seekers' Project)***
3. ***Jude Caldwell csb, Jessica Hackett and Libby Saunders welcoming people to the session.***
4. ***Louise Cleary csb, Delia Bradshaw and Glenda Goodyear enjoy conversation and supper during the session.***



In October, Louise Cleary csb (Congregational Leader) and Margaret Hill csb (Victorian Community Leader) were among the more than fifty leaders from various faiths who met with Members of Parliament and Senators in Canberra to call for the establishment of a task group to change the political and public narrative regarding asylum seekers and refugees. This forum was originally organized by Catholic Religious Australia with the support of other Christian denominations and other faiths.

(This photo and article first appeared in Cath News, www.cathnews.com.au)



Anti-Slavery Australia, in the Law School of the University of Technology, Sydney hosted the **Freedom Awards** in November. These awards recognise the work of individuals/organisations who've made a positive impact on the lives of people who've experienced trafficking, slavery or forced marriage. This year, **Maree Marsh csb** was a recipient of the award in recognition of her work with the clients of Anti-Slavery Australia. Since 2009, Maree has prepared psychological assessments for more than thirty women and men, leading to permanent residency for some and compensation for others. Maree commits herself one day a week to writing reports or offering personal support for the clients. (Photo: Maree Marsh with Jen Burn at the awards ceremony. **CONGRATULATIONS!**)

"I Stand in Solidarity with Asylum Seekers: Bring Back Australian's Humanity Stop the Persecution of Refugees"

From 29 November - Christmas Day Brigidine Sister, Jane Keogh (NSW/NZ Community) will spend the Advent season of repentance and hope on the lawns in front of Parliament House in Australia's Capital, Canberra. The liturgical colour for Advent is purple and that's what she will be wearing.

For the nights the Tent Embassy*, in true Aussie spirit, will offer Jane a safe refuge. (* Representing Aboriginal Australians)

Why is Jane taking this action?

1. to stand in solidarity with our suffering asylum seekers: on Nauru, on Manus, in detention in Australia and in community, living with the uncertainty of temporary visas.

2. to express grief at the loss of humanity expressed in Australia's current policies and ask for a stop to our persecution of refugees.

Jane, who lives in Canberra has worked for justice for refugees for over 14 years.



THE WELCOME PETITION

As a student at Killester, I, Jessica Hackett, learned that Strength and Kindness are not mere words: they are truths to live by. We should all have the moral strength and courage to be true to who we are and to be welcoming to others.

Returning 15 years later to teach Drama and English has been a fantastic opportunity to return to a place where such truths are held dear and are experienced every day.

So what does strength and kindness mean in action beyond the Killester gates? It means speaking for those who can't speak; standing for those who can't stand; walking freely for those who are not free to walk. I am planning to hand deliver a petition to the House of Representatives in regards to the rights of asylum seekers in the hope that they can finally be treated with dignity and respect. And I plan to walk.

I want to show our Parliament - *our* government - that the people of Australia are kind and strong. That we are strong enough and kind enough to give welcome to those who most need it. To do this I will be walking from Melbourne to Canberra to deliver this petition, obtaining as many signatures as I can along the way. While walking, I will document through film the ways in which people help me (food, shelter, etc.). I will also visit organisations and individuals who are helping and supporting asylum seekers and refugees. I'll visit people and document stories from those who have settled here. People who know that Australia is a land of justice and compassion. People we have welcomed.



If you would like to help, visit The Welcome Petition on Facebook or contact Jess: welcompetition@gmail.com

Melbourne to Canberra early 2016
Follow the trek: www.thewelcomepetition.com



Walking to show the hospitality of the Australian People





Memories of Celebrations at Brigidine House, Randwick

On 15 August 2004, Brigidine Sisters gathered at Brigidine Convent Randwick to give thanks for and recall a variety of significant events which took place over a period of more than 100 years of Brigidine life at Randwick, the 'old Daintry Estate'. The afternoon liturgy and memories sharing, together with a sumptuous afternoon tea, were sprinkled with tears, laughter and moments of sacredness, as all present celebrated a historical moment in our Brigidine history. The following day, August 16 saw the 'mass exodus' of the entire Community, as the sisters were transported to Waverley War Memorial Hospital property, where they took up residence, while Catholic Health Care began renovations to the Randwick Convent to prepare it to meet government Registration standards, for Age Care Facilities.



Brigidine Sisters Joan Sutherland, Zita Barron, Elaine Whittaker and Marcia Eather



Brigidine Sisters Regis, Margaret Donnelly and Theresa Boyle in 2004

Following several months of renovations and refurbishment, Randwick convent was ready for its new title, 'Brigidine House' as well as our sisters and a number of elderly women and one gentleman, to take up residency, now under the care and management of Catholic Health Care.

On April 13 2005, the new Catholic Health Care Facility was officially blessed and opened by our dear friend, Bishop David Cremin. This liturgy was led by staff and sisters in the presence of our many Brigidines, friends, families and Brigidine College staff and a number of students who provided wonderful music with orchestral backing and choir. All present were enthralled with Sr Mary Singer who at the age of ninety delivered the opening address and welcome.

There is now a beautiful photo timeline installed at Brigidine House, Randwick



Bishop David Cremin during the blessing ceremony at Randwick House in 2005



Mary Singer csb welcoming guests in 2005

Chanel Sugden csb



An image of Mother John Synan from the photo timeline



Card Making As a Ministry of Justice



Congratulations to Mairead Brophy csb of the Ireland/UK/USA Community on the continued success of her card-making

My card-making ministry began around 1994. It started very simply. I had had an operation to remove a brain tumour and subsequently had a lot of physical and medical problems with which to cope. Because of these and a few other difficulties, I had to end the teaching career which I loved. This left a significant gap in my life which I wanted to fill. I am very grateful to all the Brigidine Sisters who gave me untold practical help, support and love at that time.

As a result of the surgery, I was very unsteady on my feet and was inclined to twist my ankle. During one of the times, as I was resting my ankle back to health in my own home, I started trying my hand at art activities. My aunt, always eager to encourage me, bought me a set of nativity rubber stamps and a black ink pad. I had never seen rubber stamps before and was thrilled with them. As it was close to the Christmas season, I began by trying my hand at making Christmas cards. My mother and family were also very encouraging and by 1996 I had decided to make Christmas cards for sale.

I wrote a short letter and sent it to all Brigidines in Ireland and United Kingdom, my family, friends and neighbours. I also started to make some other greeting cards eg for St Patrick's Day and Easter. In 1996 the sale of cards raised €830 and these funds were forwarded to contribute to the work of Brigidines in Kenya or on other occasions to support the mission in Mexico.

Over time, the range of cards I make has grown. While the project originally provided much needed therapy it in turn began to raise much needed funds for mission activities. I am heartened to know that in a small but significant way it contributes to the spreading of the Good News.

As the card-making project has become better known over the years, it has grown.

- In the first year we raised €830.
- In 2007 we raised €5,500.
- In 2012 we raised €8000.
- In 2014, €5,500 were raised.

Some years we have raised more money than others but each amount is deeply appreciated as we realize there are many calls on people's purses. Everyone's generosity has also enabled us to reach out and help support other mission projects in China and Uganda.

Every year, the card-making project is granted a generous donation from the Ireland/UK Brigidine Project Fund and for this I am extremely grateful. This has enabled me to buy the required art and craft supplies from various shops around Dublin. Through the years I have made many friends through my trips to purchase supplies. I am also grateful to the many sisters who collect bits and pieces that help make the cards. They all help and nothing is disregarded.

While engaged in this ministry I have learnt a lot. While in some ways I am still a beginner in this field of art and craft I continue to gather ideas from various craft books and magazines or from demonstrations that are often held in art or hobby shops. These are usually free of charge and open to all who wish to attend.

Thank you to everyone who has ever bought any of my cards. Thanks also to the many who continue to support me in this ministry. I deeply appreciate your interest and support.

Go raibh maith agat!

Mairead Brophy csb



Year of Consecrated Life Event - Sandhurst Diocese



1. *Margaret Hill csb and David Austin osa*
2. *Canisia Larkin csb and Angela Ryan csb*
3. *Julia Williams csb, Catriona Devlin csb, Maria Guinan csb*

4. *Young people at St Augustine's Kyabram*
5. *Margaret Bannan and Margaret Duffy csb at Echuca*
6. *Margaret Hill csb, Margaret Leahy, Nellie Roberts, Gerry Leahy at Rochester*



Good News To Share



DO YOU REMEMBER?

The 2011 Congregational Forum recommended that we utilise our Brigidine website for the exchange of resources.

(Refer 2011 Congregational Forum Booklet, p 13)

Over the past few months, members of the Congregational Leadership Team have been working with staff at Fraynetwork, Melbourne, to update and upgrade our website.

We are pleased to announce that the new website for Brigidine Sisters will soon be fully functional and we encourage you to check it out and invite your family, friends, colleagues and associates to also check it out.



Thanks to Patricia Mulhall csb, Windsor, UK who once again this year will be collating our Brigidine Directory. This “little book” certainly assists us all keep in touch, both within and across our Communities. The 2016 edition will be distributed early in the new year. Thanks also to all our Community secretaries and leadership teams who support Patricia in this ministry of administration.

Thanks to Lia Commadeur csb, Mordialloc, Victoria who has been the proof-reader for each 2015 edition of Brigidine Focus. Well done Lia!

Check out our
NEW WEBSITE!

Simply search
www.brigidinesisters.org.au

Thanks to all who have helped in this extensive task by supplying data or photos. Unfortunately, at times some images were not clear enough to be used. We have also learnt that we need to ensure we keep a store of appropriate photos from our various events and occasions.

We will continue to upload **News and Events** as they come to hand. We are sure that Brigidine members will find accessing and using the **Members Only Section** a valuable way of keeping in touch with each other, of sharing resource materials and articles and especially with ongoing preparations for the 2016 Congregational Forum. All the 2015 editions of Brigidine Focus will be uploaded to the **Members Only Section** by the end of 2015.

Other websites related to ministries in which a number of Brigidines are engaged:

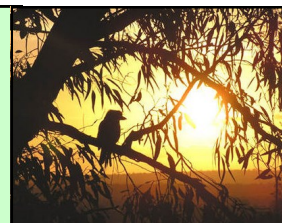
- www.solasbhride.ie
- www.brigidine.org.nz
- www.gatheringplace.org.au
- www.teachbhride.com
- www.kildaracentre.org
- www.earthsong.org.au
- www.kildareministries.org
- www.basp.org.au
- Kildare Ministries' schools and community works.



Northern Winter Solstice

“In order to live the immense challenges of our time, we must be able to imagine that our present struggle can eventuate in a truly glorious mode of human and earth life in the future.”

Brian Swimme (1984)



Southern Summer Solstice



Dates For Your 2016 Calendar



The International Year of Pulses aims to heighten public awareness of the nutritional benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production aimed towards food security and nutrition.

The Year aims to create opportunities to encourage connections throughout the food chain that would better utilize pulse-based proteins, further global production of pulses, better utilize crop rotations and address the challenges in the trade of pulses. Pulses are annual leguminous crops yielding between one and twelve grains or seeds of variable size, shape and colour within a pod, used for both food and feed.

1 January - World Day of Peace

31st January - 1st February
Feile Bhride 2016

St Brigid's Eve Ritual
will be held at St Brigid's Well, Kildare.

A pilgrimage of quiet reflection, song and prayer on the eve of the Northern Springtime.



8 February - St Bakhita Day

St Josephine Bakhita, a former slave was canonized in 2000. She is the patron saint of Sudan and all trafficked people.



10 February - Ash Wednesday - Lent

8 March - International Women's Day

22 March - World Water Day

24 March - Holy Thursday

25 March - Good Friday

27 March - Easter Day

Buy only Fair Trade Easter Eggs



22 April - International Earth Day

15 May - Pentecost Day

15 - 31 May - Congregational Forum at Tullo



"As Earth makes fresh things grow; as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will God's integrity and justice spring forth."
Isaiah 61:11

29 May - Corpus Christi Day

12 June - UN International Day Against Child Labour

20 June - World Refugee Day

9 July - Daniel Delany Day



30 July - UN Day Against Trafficking Persons

21 September - International Day of Peace

11 October - International Day of the Girl Child

17 October - International Day - Eradication of Poverty

24 October - United Nations Day

1 November - All Saints Day



25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

27 November - First Sunday of Advent

1 December - World AIDS Day

10 December - Human Rights Day



A Ritual to Celebrate the End of 2015 and the Beginning of 2016

INTRODUCTION: As one year ends and another dawns it is an appropriate time to reflect and put things into perspective. Over the past months we have been blessed in many ways. We are grateful too in the knowledge that all times are sacred and that God's outpouring of love is continually ongoing. Aware of this, we recommit ourselves to being open to the unfolding Mystery of God's life and vision.

OPENING PRAYER: God of all creation, we give thanks for all the blessings of family, Community and a country wherein freedom, beauty and plenty abound. Throughout 2015, we have been enriched by the care and support of others and by the many opportunities of each day. You have surrounded us with countless gifts of nature and with rich relationships. May we remember these blessings now and hold them in the silence of our hearts.

SONG: eg *Everyday God* - Bernadette Farrell or *It is Good to Be Here* - David Haas

RECALLING THE BLESSINGS OF THE YEAR: This is an opportunity for each to recall and name some of the blessings they have received during 2015.

After each blessing people respond with: **God of Life, we remember your blessings and gifts.**

PSALM 118: ALL: We give thanks to You, O God, for You are kind.

Your steadfast love endures forever!

Let all the nations proclaim, "Your love endures forever!"

Let all the peoples cry, "Your love endures forever!"

When all my fears surrounded me, I acknowledged Your presence within me!

When they surrounded me on every side, in Your strong presence I faced them!

You are my strength and my song.

You are my Beloved and I will give thanks to You.

We give thanks to You, O Blessed One, for You are kind;

Your steadfast love endures forever!



PRAYER FOR NEW BEGINNINGS:

We bring to mind the losses of this past year :

the loss of love,

the loss of loved ones in our family, our Community and our circles of friends,

the passing of days never to be lived again.

Loving God, You make all things new.

Help us to release any old grief, old anger or old remorse.

Help us now to allow space for healing, for new possibilities and for new vision.

Amen.

READING: Genesis 28:15

Be sure, I am with you. I shall keep you safe wherever you go,

and bring you back to this country,

for I shall never desert you until I have done what I have promised you.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS: Aware of the needs of our planet and our world let us offer our prayers.....

(After each prayer a tea light is lit and placed in the circle as a sign of peace)

CLOSING PRAYER: Loving God, once more the circle of the years is turning.

We find ourselves on the threshold of a new beginning, carrying with us our hopes and plans. While we cannot see what lies ahead, we are united in our living faith, and we trust in Your promise of life for all.

With these gifts we cross over the threshold to the coming year. Amen.



Marta Debski csb

1937 - 2015

Marta Debski was a woman of native poise, dignity and charm and in that she was a lady. Hitler could not deprive her of that but he did deprive her of being the woman she might have become.

We cannot imagine the upheaval in the life of a small child hurriedly rushed to Germany, her mother's country, leaving her father to the impossible task of the salvation of Poland. This upheaval brought with it a language change, lack of education and living with constant fear. More was to come when her father, released from the army, crossed into Germany to try and find his wife and two daughters. This search and eventual reunion reads like an epic story. Finding two little girls playing in the street, Marta wearing a knitted beanie, he recognised as his wife's handiwork. The girls led by him to his wife. Shortly after, they were moved into a camp, then into another camp, the vortex of people frightening to little children. In the midst of all this they made a decision to come to Australia. Like all migrants at this time, they were placed in a camp and then another camp in Cooma. This is where Marta first met the Brigidine Sisters who were teaching in the school. Her decision to enter the convent led to another life of discipline during the novitiate after which she was professed and moved into the Community.

I worked with her as a novice and then as a professed sister during the years of 1954 to 1961 when I was community bursar. Marta was a very reliable person attending to the many chores within the community.

When she was professed we worked together to cook the meals for the retreatants under direction of Fr. Peter Kenny S.J. One day Marta remarked to me that she loved the peaceful atmosphere of the retreat. I told Fr. Peter of her seeking a peaceful atmosphere and he asked to see her. They had a long conversation together where she was respectfully listened to and her simplicity accepted. I never saw her angry but I realised the kitchen work was very hard on one who had never had to cook before doing so for fifty-seven Brigidine sisters, twenty-seven novices and one hundred and twelve boarders.

When Marta left to look after her parents, I understood how the early upheavals of her life impacted on her. She was by nature a thinker and preferred ultimately the peace and safety of her little cabin where she could talk to her dogs, her cats, and her horse who never threatened her. There she could live quietly and peacefully. In such a secure setting, no Hitler or any camp could threaten her any more.

Marta, how wonderful for you, that like Blessed John Newman you have now woken "up into the Face of Christ". Goodbye dear Marta, we all loved you.

Eileen Creagh csb





Mary Quirk csb
1936 - 2015

Mary Quirk was born in Tocumwal, NSW, in May 1936, the eldest of three daughters to William and Teresa. At an early age, in order to provide Catholic secondary education for the girls Mary, Anne and Noreen went to board with the Brigidine Sisters at Wangaratta. This would have been a great sacrifice for both the parents and the girls at that time. After completing her secondary schooling Mary trained at Mercy Teachers' College, Ascot Vale. Her first appointment was at St Brigid's School, North Fitzroy, followed by two years at St Catherine's Children's Home in Geelong. She then returned to Wangaratta where she taught the junior classes at St Joseph's College. Her time in Wangaratta was a time for renewing school friendships and forming many relationships through her active involvement in YCW, tennis and netball teams, ballroom dancing and social engagements as had been the case in Geelong. From these interactions lifelong friendships were formed. To the surprise of many, this active, fun-loving and popular Mary Quirk set off to the Brigidine Novitiate in 1959.

Mary was a totally committed Brigidine who faithfully carried out her mission in the service of God's people. She was involved in primary education as a teacher and a principal. Each and every child was important to her. She was a natural teacher and could relate to children of all ages. Her work as religious education co-ordinator and consultant led her into the development of programs which skilled and trained teachers and catechists. Mary moved into home/school liaison work and then into parish pastoral ministry where all these skills continued to be used. She was a great 'people' person – always giving encouragement and care to those in need and enabling them to belong to the community of the parish. Her involvement in the RCIA program across the Archdiocese of Melbourne assisted many people to find God in their lives and become at home in our Church.

In the Brigidine community Mary was a real 'homemaker' and used her creative skills and warmth of heart to ensure all were welcome and included. Mary's own deep prayer life and love of scripture and theological study gave life to our community reflections and to her ministry. Her work across the years spanned many parishes and friends and connections were made. Her influence for good is remembered in all of those places. Compassion, her empowerment of others, her listening skills, loyalty and her genuineness are the gifts that are spoken of so often. Mary loved her family dearly and treasured her country upbringing, the Murray River, the trees, the harvests and surrounds. Journeys to Tocumwal were special times not only for celebrations but particularly when her much loved parents were ill. We were kept up to date with news of all her family as Mary was so proud of them all.

In 1961 Mary vowed to live a life of service as her response to the call to the mission of Jesus as a Brigidine Sister. Her life was lived out in total dedication to all that was asked of her and in that she has given life to many. In recent years her life changed dramatically through the effects of Alzheimers and all that Mary had been part of, engaged in and enjoyed was lost for her. In this mystery time of her life we believe that the same 'yes' Mary vowed to her God years ago continued to be given every moment through her suffering. The 'yes' of being totally dependent, of just being there, was a time of waiting on her God whom she had served so well and faithfully. Mary, we were united with you in that mystery and loved you through it. We did not forget the sacred memories, those fun-filled days, the causes we fought for, the programs we wrote, the children we helped, the lonely who were comforted, and all the friendships along the way. Mary, though we see you no more you echo still within our thoughts and words and all you were has become woven into what we are. Rest now in peace, Mary!

Margaret Hill csb



Congratulations to all our 2016 Jubilarians

PLATINUM JUBILEES: 70 years of profession

8 September	Nance McFadden	NSW/NZ Community
	Cyprian Wilson	NSW/NZ Community

DIAMOND JUBILEES: 60 years of profession

31 August	Bernardine Finn	I/UK/US Community
	Brenda McEveney	I/UK/US Community
	Margaret Walsh	I/UK/US Community
27 September	Anita Le Clercq	Victorian Community
	Maureen O'Reilly	Victorian Community

GOLDEN JUBILEES: 50 years of profession

10 January	Kathleen Butler	NSW/NZ Community
18 August	Mary Hiney	I/UK/US Community
22 August	Anna Hennessy	I/UK/US Community
28 August	Imelda Phelan	I/UK/US Community
3 December	Delys Baldwin	Victorian Community
	Jane Gorey	Victorian Community
	Rosemarie Joyce	Victorian Community
	Kathleen Woodruff	Victorian Community



**Holy Mystery, Ground of Being,
You are the Divine Energy within all that is.
You are at the heart of this moment beckoning us forward.
Stay with us in our dreaming and our planning
as we cross the threshold
to the next stage of the unfolding Mystery of Life. Amen.**