

# 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**

**JULY 2015**



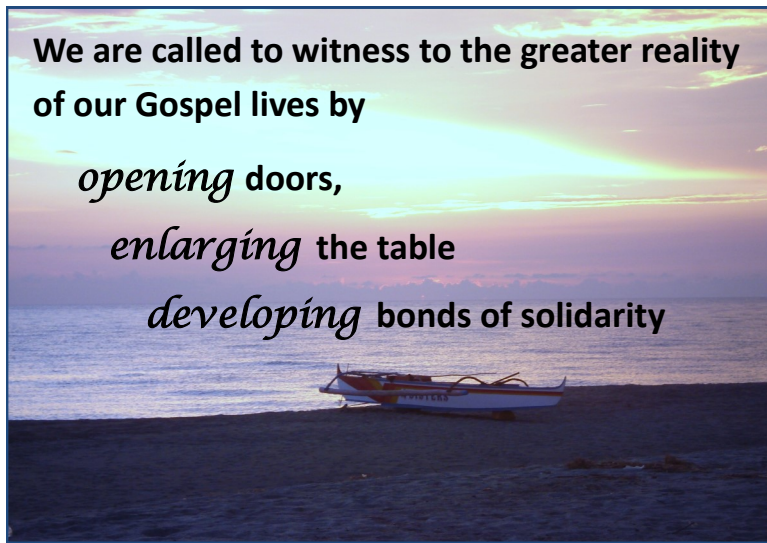
Syrian refugee children waiting in line for humanitarian aid

**"Refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity.  
They are children, women and men  
who leave or are forced to leave their homes for various reasons,  
who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having,  
but above all for being more."**

**Pope Francis  
(World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2014)**



## Message from the Congregational Leadership Team



Courage, cooperation and contemplation marked the way in which the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) faced the scrutiny and the past three-year's oversight of their organisation by the Vatican. This investigation was concluded in April 2015. We applaud the honesty, capacity to carry pain and suffering, and the commitment of our sisters to stand for their core mission ie *"to carry out their service of leadership to further the mission of the Gospel in today's world."* In this *Year of Consecrated Life*, they are strong role models of prophetic service in the face of adversity - not only for other women religious, but for all Christian people. How did they achieve this? Certainly by the willingness of the LCWR Leadership Group to stay at the table and to sustain on-going dialogue. They also achieved this by inviting all their membership to earnestly engage in a contemplative process that grounded the LCWR in prayerful reflection and an unswerving commitment to their mission of service to people and the planet.

In some Communities last year, we, the Congregational Leadership Team, adapted and shared one of the tools that LCWR had used - a card with an evocative image and a provocative statement. One of these cards reads: ***"We are called to witness to the greater reality of our Gospel lives by opening doors, enlarging the table and developing bonds of solidarity."*** Juxtaposing these Gospel imperatives with some of the screaming headlines of recent news is cause for serious reflection and action:

- ♦ *Malaysian Trafficking Camps 'Abandoned After Crackdown' (26 May)*
- ♦ *Myanmar's Abandoned Rohingya: Asia's Pariah People (May12)*
- ♦ *More Fatal Earthquakes to Come due to Climate Change (28 April)*
- ♦ *Up to 700 Feared Dead as Migrant Ship Capsizes in Mediterranean (20 April)*
- ♦ *Climate Catastrophe Will Hit Tropics Around 2020, Rest Of World Around 2047 (October 2014)*

One could add many more. As gospel people, are we outraged to the point of protest and action, or is it all too hard? There is a telling passage in *Gaudium et Spes* (#9) that is prophetic for today - *"The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds or the foulest. Before it lies the path to freedom or to slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred."* We live in a globalised world where we can choose to be swamped by fear or to act with courage and be truth-tellers and hope-bringers. How might we give gospel witness by ***'opening doors'***? We have considerable resources to build human solidarity and international support, and an exemplar in Jesus who brought women, Samaritans, lepers and Roman centurions into the fold. This should give us courage to be a voice against the demonization of any people. Pope Francis gives us the lead by encouraging nation states not to erect borders but to work cooperatively to help the scores of migrants currently trapped after attempting to cross





## Message from the Congregational Leadership Team

the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The interfaith response to family detention in South Texas reported in this edition of Focus, is one clear beacon of hope in ‘opening doors’.

How might we give Gospel witness by ‘**enlarging the table**’? Our fragile world community is in need of a drastic change in attitude toward “the other”. This may be in the context of encountering a newly arrived migrant in our street, the veiled Muslim woman or the transgendered person. Again Jesus shows us the way. He ignored social boundaries and opened table sharing to the poor without proper garments. On other occasions, he set aside social taboos by interacting with ‘unclean’ women. Jesus was not from the privileged class of his time and he modelled inclusion, giving hope to the disenfranchised and a sense that the love of God and the care of the community was gift and right for them also.

How might we give gospel witness by ‘**developing bonds of solidarity**’? As described above, we are challenged to develop bonds of solidarity with all people. A strategic building of solidarity to address the evil of human trafficking has been established by Pope Francis and other faith leaders in the ‘Global Freedom Network’. However, there is yet another urgent challenge to develop bonds of solidarity with the life-giving planet on whom we depend. As Cardinal Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace said at the General Assembly for Caritas Internationalis, “*Human beings are part of nature, but too often we have ‘traversed the planet’s most fundamental natural boundaries’ leading to a disruption of the earth’s ecological balance and threatening the earth with great ruin.*” We look forward to developing with others a greater solidarity for ecological justice in response to the forthcoming encyclical by Pope Francis on climate change.

Courage, cooperation and contemplation are called for in reading these signs of the times and responding to the imperative to work for ecological and social justice wherever we are. In this edition of Focus, Brigidine women and our colleagues in ministry share reflections that give substance to the call to witness to the greater reality of our Gospel lives by opening doors, enlarging the table and developing bonds of solidarity with Earth, with all creatures and all peoples with whom we share this sacred space. We invite you to ponder these reflections as part of the preparation for the 2016 Brigidine Congregational Forum which is now less than twelve months away. Two of the key purposes of this Forum are:

- ♦ To deepen our understandings of the realities of the whole Congregation and of today's world in which we live and minister
- ♦ To set Directions for the next period of time - by asking ourselves questions like *What is our call in furthering the mission of God now?*

Quiet reading and reflection, spirited conversation and the sharing of practical action are all grist for the mill so that these months might become a “Graced Moment” - one in which we will recognize “Divine Energy Animating Fresh Possibilities.”



Louise O'Leary

Mary Blattery

Kathleen Butler

Claire Griffin

Congregational Leadership Team



## **‘You Shall Come No Further’ - Are there Roots that Hold?**

**Were you there when I stopped the waters?  
as they issued gushing from the womb?  
when I wrapped the ocean in clouds  
and swaddled the sea in shadows?  
when I closed it in with barriers  
and set its boundaries, saying  
“Here you may come but no farther;  
here shall your proud waves break.”  
(from God’s answer to Job) <sup>1</sup>**

As we experience growing anxiety about the ‘autism’ of our species in the industrialised world and the seeming inability of our institutions to hear the cries of our planet, it is heartening to find in the faith tradition, that in some ways enabled so much destruction of life, still has profound messages as yet unheeded.

God’s reply to Job is, in the view of Bill McKibben, the first great piece of modern nature writing; the language ‘biologically accurate, earthy, juicy, crusty, wild, untamed’ <sup>2</sup>. Job, we know is struggling – struggling with the meaning of his immense suffering. He has lost everything, great herds of livestock, his sons and his daughters, and now too, covered with ulcers, his health. Three friends arrive to comfort him but insist on the ‘truth’ that suffering is punishment for evil. For 34 chapters the friends repeat, rehash and backtrack over tired arguments, their theology ‘an exhausted mine’. <sup>3</sup> Job himself is struggling with a ‘new fact’, one that simply does not fit their assumptions. He knows he is not an evil man; he is thus locked in a battle with the orthodoxy of his time.

Then, at long last, God speaks. He does not address Job’s immediate problems, does not refer to his acute distress or to his anguished questions. In answer he speaks only (and in gorgeous poetry) of a wild and glorious world – a world that is ‘rapacious, tough, deadly, amoral’ – intoxicatingly alive, every being in place. <sup>4</sup> The voice is fierce; the tone deeply sarcastic. ‘Were you there when I planned the earth? when I stopped the waters? when I wrapped the ocean in clouds? when I set the boundaries for the waves? Do you hunt game for the lioness, finding her prey at nightfall when her cubs are aching with hunger? Did you teach the

vultures to soar, scanning for prey so his little ones may drink blood?’ In two great speeches God presents Job with a picture of an astonishing world – but a world in which humans simply do not appear. <sup>5</sup>

What is happening here? One message is crystal clear. Job is suffering. God is giving him new eyes, showing him that he is part, and only part, of a vast world. Humans are not the centre. Creation exists without us and before us. In the presence of this glory, Job is silent.



But what of us? What is our response to the gauntlet that God throws down? Do *you* set the boundaries of the sea? Do *you* wrap the ocean in clouds? Do *you* plan the earth? And our answer is ‘Well, we’re giving it a pretty good try’. <sup>6</sup> We no longer feel small, let alone smaller than God. We are changing the boundaries of the ocean, dismantling the barriers. ‘Here you may come *and* further’, we say to the waves. Sea level rise as a result of global warming is all our doing. Waves break further inland, threatening islands, fragile and crucial swamps, wetlands and corals. Unaided we are changing the chemistry and physics of the planet in which civilization developed and to which life as we know it is adapted. We have altered the movements of the great ocean currents and the winds. The clouds that wrap the ocean now move at our behest, and the very ice-caps are melting unpredictably, disturbing the immense hydrological cycles that have been in place for millenia.

The book of Job, as McKibben eloquently shows, is exquisitely apt for our own time. We too



## ‘You Shall Come No Further’ - Are there Roots that Hold?

urgently need to recognise that we are part of a greater whole. We too are struggling with a worn out orthodoxy – ours being the ‘self evident’ assumption that growth is good. We too have to deal with a ‘new fact’ that simply will not fit the old paradigm. And the fact is that there is a limit. We cannot keep our commitment to individual materialism and the cult of expansion – and survive. We too have placed ourselves at the centre. We have taken control, unwilling to let go, relentlessly obliterating the world, making it over in our image. Far from being silenced we are actively engaged in a process of ‘de-creation’, and as a result the God of Job is becoming harder and harder to see.<sup>7</sup>

Are there roots that hold? There is no doubt that mainstream Judeo-Christian tradition has mediated a profoundly human-centred reading of life, decentring the self perhaps, but primarily in relation to other human beings. Such an interpretation is our orthodoxy and it is now deeply destructive of the world around us. So, suddenly, the book of Job seems an uncanny and prescient gift. To allow ourselves to feel in the gut the truth of de-creation takes immense effort. Despair and resistance well up, even in an action as simple as writing the previous paragraph. God’s answer to Job shows a wild and beautiful world, some of which we have destroyed. Disappearing lions and vultures affect whole ecosystems. Maybe the system is already collapsing, but it has not yet all gone. Following the tradition of the prophets we can choose to stand against the dominant culture, choose to fight to protect this wild beauty. ‘[W]e cannot renew the whole system of balances, symmetries and reciprocities’ that we have shattered, but we can commit to move in that direction.<sup>8</sup> ‘Why are we here? At least in part, or so God implies in his answer to Job, to be part of the great play of life, but only a part. We are not bigger than everything else – we are *like* everything else, meant to be exuberant, and wild and limited’.<sup>9</sup>

**Jan Morgan**

### Endnotes

1. Job 38, 8-11. All biblical references are from the translation by Stephen Mitchell.
2. McKibben, pp. 57, 53. Bill McKibben is the founder of 350.org. For this column I am deeply indebted to his small but stunning book *The comforting whirlwind*. To listen to his unforgettable sermon on Job at Riverside Church New York visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gelni\\_BwjGw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gelni_BwjGw)
3. Gutierrez, quoted in McKibben, p. 2.
4. McKibben, p. 56.
5. Job chapters 38-39, 40-41.
6. For a chilling account of grand scale technological interventions currently being pursued see Hamilton, 2013.
7. McKibben, p. 10.
8. Mathews, 2012.
9. McKibben, p. 87.

### References

- Clive Hamilton, *Earth Masters: Playing God with Climate*, (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2013).
- Freya Mathews, ‘The Anguish of Wildlife Ethics’, (*New Formations* 75, 2012).
- Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation*, (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

*Jan Morgan worked for over a decade in Clinical Pastoral Education at Peter McCallum Cancer Institute, and has conducted a course with Pat Long, under the auspices of EarthSong called Growing our Ecological Identity. Currently she lives and writes in inner city Melbourne, and teaches a course in ecoministry in The John Paver Centre at the Centre for Theology and Ministry (CTM). In 2013 she published Earth’s Cry: prophetic ministry in a more-than-human world (Uniting Academic Press).*







## Pope Francis's 2015 'Climate Change Encyclical' - A Sneak Preview?

The following points are drawn from Pope Francis' statements to date on environmental issues:

**Our lost moral compass:** "We are experiencing a moment of crisis; we see it in the environment, but mostly we see it in man. The human being is at stake: here is the urgency of human ecology! And the danger is serious because the cause of the problem is not superficial, but profound: it's not just a matter of economics, but of ethics."

**Rapid environmental collapse:** A "threat to peace arises from the greedy exploitation of environmental resources. Monopolizing of lands, deforestation, the appropriation of water, inadequate agro-toxics are some of the evils that tear man from the land of his birth. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness."

**Exploiting natural resources:** "Genesis tells us that God created man and woman entrusting them with the task of filling the earth and subduing it, which does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work."

**Failure to respect nature:** "This task entrusted to us by God the Creator requires us to grasp the rhythm and logic of Creation. But we are often driven by pride of domination, of possessions, manipulation, of exploitation; we do not care for Creation, we do not respect it."

**Rich and poor are responsible:** "Nurturing and cherishing Creation is a command God gives not only at the beginning of history, but to each of us. It is part of God's plan; it means causing the world to grow responsibly, transforming it so that it may be a garden, a habitable place for everyone."

**Money trumps morality:** Without a moral code, "it is no longer man who commands, but money. Cash commands. Greed is the motivation ... An economic system centred on the god of money needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it." Instead, Pope Francis calls for a "radical new financial and economic system to avoid human inequality and ecological devastation."

**We worship money:** "We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money". Pope Francis warns that "trickle-down economics is a failed theory". He has said that the "invisible hand" of capitalism cannot be trusted; "excessive consumerism is killing our culture, values and ethics" and "the conservative ideal of individualism is undermining the common good."

**Capitalism killing Planet Earth:** Pope Francis warns that capitalism is the "root cause" of all the world's problems: "As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems," as environmental damage does trickle down to most on the world's poor.

**Revolution coming:** Pope Francis is committed to changing the world, fast. Some reporters have downplayed the animosity of his enemies, climate deniers and conservative politicians in headlines such as: "Pope Francis's edict on climate change will anger deniers and U.S. churches." (*The Guardian*)

**Anger? Much more:** The Pope seems to be welcoming of an open rebellion against these enemies. But being a realist, he knows full well there's no chance of changing the minds of hard-right politicians and the other climate-science deniers heavily dependent on fossil-fuel political donations. But he's clearly laying the groundwork for a global economic revolution, and his enemies know it. Even more interesting will be watching the ripple effect the "Climate Change Encyclical" ignites after Pope Francis speaks to the UN General Assembly and his message has been translated into more than a thousand languages and broadcast to seven billion worldwide, billions who are already directly experiencing climate change "evils that tear man from the land of his birth." Given the far reach of his forthcoming encyclical, Pope Francis's revolution will accelerate.

His 2015 battle cry is for a global revolution, a call for billions to take back their planet from a fossil-fuel industry that has no moral compass and is self-destructive.

- **Which of these points offer you hope?**
- **Which points invite us to recommit to advocacy and action for ecological justice as we prepare for our Congregational Forum?**



## What Responses Will We Make to This Biggest Human Tragedy of our Time?

### The Numbers:

**More than 50 million people worldwide** are now forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and persecution, the highest number since the mid-1990's. Several million people remain displaced because of natural disasters, although updated statistics are not always available. More than 15 million of the uprooted are refugees who fled their home countries, while another 27 million are people who remain displaced by conflict within their own homelands - so called 'internally displaced people.' Current major refugee populations, include:

- Palestinians (4.8 million)
- Afghans (2.9 million)
- Iraqis (1.8 million)
- Somalis (700,000)
- Congolese (456,000)
- Myanmar (407,000)
- Colombians (390,000)
- Sudanese (37,000)

"Refugees  
have been deprived of their homes  
but they must not be deprived of their futures."  
UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

**Children constitute over 40% of the world's refugee population with some reports saying that more than 25,000 unaccompanied children lodged asylum applications in 77 countries last year. Approximately half of all refugees are women.**

Four-fifths of the world's refugees are in the developing world, in nations that can least afford to host them.

**About two-thirds of the world's refugees have been in exile for more than five years, many of them with no end in sight.**

"Today's challenges are interconnected and complex. Population growth, urbanization, climate change, water scarcity and food and energy insecurity are exacerbating conflict and combining in other ways that oblige people to flee their countries."

UN High Commissioner for Refugees,  
Antonio Guterres.

"Refugees don't need our tears. They need us to stop making them refugees."

(Headline in The Guardian newspaper)



*"We cannot continue to read out laws like the lawyers do, but that is not enough. The way of the law, the way of justice should open itself to the way of love."* Bishop Mario Grech, who with an imam and other religious leaders, led prayers in a tent outside the morgue of the Mater Dei Hospital in Valetta, Malta for some of the hundreds of victims who drowned recently in the Mediterranean while seeking freedom and peace.

At the 2011 Brigidine Congregational Forum, we were reminded that we have a responsibility to respond to the cry of the poor - words which echo the call of the ancient prophets and of Jesus, (himself an asylum seeker, forced to flee with his parents to Egypt). The Forum affirmed *"all that is being done as a Congregation, as individuals and in partnership with others in justice initiatives, e.g. work with asylum seekers and displaced peoples"*. (2011 CF Booklet, pg. 15).

Since 2011, our Brigidine Common Project Fund has contributed to a number of such initiatives around the Congregation. However, there are thousands more people still being forced to flee war, persecution and poverty. Data suggests that the plight of these people must remain a priority for all people of goodwill.

Surely, **this unprecedented human tragedy of our times** call us individually and as a Community to deeper prayer, stronger advocacy and more ongoing concerted action, if we are to truly call ourselves 'Christian'.

*Claire Griffin csb*



## Brigidines Commit to Ending Systemic Social Injustices

*"We request the Congregational Leadership Team to explore Non-Government Organisation (NGO) status at the United Nations as a means of impacting on global concerns."* (Congregational Forum 2001, p11)

### **'Compassion and Justice for Humanity and the Earth'**



At the Council of the Congregation, San Antonio, May-June 2003, this request was discerned. Sisters Sharon Altendorf, PBVM and Catherine Ferguson, SNJM, gave presentations on their work at the UN. When it became clear to the assembled group that NGO Consultative Status at the UN could bring about systemic change, the decision was taken to join **UNANIMA International (UI)**, an NGO coalition of seven small congregations, working at the UN on behalf of women and children in poverty, refugees and migrants and care of the planet and committed to working for social justice, the recognition of human dignity and systemic change.

The Council document stated: *"It was envisaged that our belonging to UNANIMA International (UI) will give the opportunity to all members of the Brigidine Congregation to participate in ministry to victims of social injustice at some level – through solidarity, compassionate prayer, direct or indirect support, advocacy and/or through being informed about issues and informing others."*  
(2001 Council of Congregation, p21)

Sr Louise Cleary, Congregation Leader, joined the Board of **UI** the following year. In September, 2005, she invited me, Patricia Mulhall, to take her place on the Board as the Brigidine representative. Sr Kathleen Butler, a member of the current Congregational Leadership Team, has now served on the Board since 2011.

As **UI** lobbied on social justice issues: migrants, refugees, care of the planet, at UN level, it became clear that human trafficking was a growing 'modern slavery,' globally and locally. It required strong advocacy at the highest level in order to stem the tide of exploitation, particularly of women and children for sex trafficking. Following research, **UI** embarked on a strategy of education-awareness, advocacy, lobbying and campaigning as it launched its anti-trafficking programme with a specific focus on demand. Demand was regarded as the 'engine driving human trafficking,' often missing from agendas. An initial 3-year phase, **'Stop the Demand'** began 2007- 2010, with an education programme, firstly to raise awareness of the issue among the seven congregations.



As **UI** was conducting its campaign, Brigidines were engaged in other activities at both national and local levels. Some such initiatives include being members of:

- Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans **ACRATH** [www.acrath.org.au](http://www.acrath.org.au)
- Act to Prevent Trafficking, Ireland **APT** [www.aptireland.org](http://www.aptireland.org)
- Safe houses in the UK **Medaille** Trust [www.medaille.org](http://www.medaille.org)
- Trafficking Awareness & Campaigning, **TRAC** [www.traconline.org.uk](http://www.traconline.org.uk).

At different times, individual Brigidines have been active members of these and other groups focussed on education and awareness raising about issues related to human trafficking as well as taking action with others to prevent human trafficking. Brigidines in all parts of the Congregation support these initiatives with prayer, especially on the annual **NOT-FOR-SALE Sunday** each May.





## Brigidines Commit to Ending Systemic Social Injustices

I joined Medaille & TRAC UK – an inter-congregational initiative which started in 2005 to ‘shelter’ victims, educate and campaign. TRAC lobbies for government legislation and successfully participated in lobbying for the Modern Slavery Bill, which since March 2014 is now in UK Law. Support for these initiatives has been received from both our Community Project Fund and from the Congregation’s Common Project Fund.

I became a member of **RENATE** (*Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation*) [www.renate-europe.net](http://www.renate-europe.net), when it was officially launched in Poland. It is comprised of seventy-five participants from seventeen countries of Europe. In 2010, I was invited to facilitate a meeting in Croatia of the **RENATE** working board. Subsequently, I joined the Board and have been ‘working’ with sisters in Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Albania, planning strategies and training programmes in education-awareness and prevention. Currently, I am leading a team on a ‘Mapping Exercise’ researching trafficking in ten European (*mainly Eastern*) countries. The RENATE Network includes sisters from twenty countries across Europe.



In January, 2015 I was in Malta – a ‘transit’ island magnet for traffickers as a ‘gateway’ into affluent EU countries. Just recently in March, I was asked to facilitate a meeting of the Working Board in Albania – one of the poorest countries in Eastern Europe - where trafficking is rife. Twenty-four women religious and women working on behalf of Congregations from Albania / Belgium / Bulgaria / Croatia / Czech Republic / France / Germany / Hungary / Ireland / Italy / Lithuania / Malta / Netherlands / Poland / Romania / Slovakia / Spain and UK met. This proved to be a very important meeting to plan a corporate strategy, to share best practice and to lend support and solidarity to each other in multiple actions and prayer in efforts to support victims and put an end to human trafficking.

While gathered, we celebrated the beatification of Archbishop Oscar Romero, with one of his quotes: *“A church that doesn’t provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn’t unsettle, a word of God that doesn’t get under anyone’s skin, a word of God that doesn’t touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed – what gospel is that?”*

We are heartened by ongoing work on the international scene against human trafficking. **UISG** (International Union of Superiors General) and **CI** (Caritas Internationalis) issued a joint statement against Human Trafficking in 2007 (refer [www.inratip.org](http://www.inratip.org)). More than thirty sisters from twenty-six nations launched INRATIP (International Network of Religious Against Trafficking in Persons) in 2008.



St Bakhita

With a ‘champion’ like Pope Francis, initiating and supporting efforts to end ‘modern slavery’ by convening conferences at the Vatican and declaring St Bakhita Day (*herself a victim of slavery*), 8 February, an International Day of Prayer, may we continue to educate, lobby and campaign to end systemic injustices as we proclaim the gospel that touches the ‘sin’ of our society *of which Romero speaks*.

*Patricia Mulhall csb*

*(In May 2015, Bishop Oscar Romero was beatified in Rome.)*



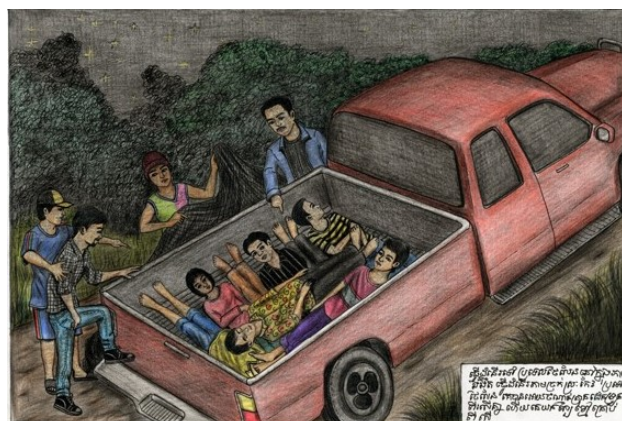
## An Update from UNANIMA International

**The UNANIMA International Board Meeting** took place in New York from 5 - 7 March 2015 in an extremely cold and snowy landscape. The usual business matters of the Board were dealt with and some special presentations were also a part of the three days:

- \* a presentation from Aine O'Connor RSM which dealt with a rights-based approach to resource extraction in the pursuit of sustainable development
- \* the UI presentation at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) which focused on three different women of courage, their stories and challenges
- \* the CSW59 opening day, Beijing+20, which gauged how far and to what degree the rights of women have been advanced since the first Beijing Conference in 1995.

**Not-For-Sale-Sunday:** All members of the Congregation were invited to take part in a day of prayer and reflection on Sunday 17 May 2015 which focused on the plight of trafficked persons globally. Sisters reflected and prayed alone or came together in small groups. This was an expression of our partnership with UI, which works tirelessly against trafficking in persons. It was also an expression of our solidarity with Brigidine Sisters in Australia, Ireland, UK and USA who are committed to assisting the victims of trafficking or creating structures and programmes which develop awareness of trafficking in persons, to name but two initiatives as examples.

**A drawing from an Indian Government program  
2015 warning children on ways  
child traffickers work.**



The earthquake in Nepal has been before our eyes daily in the media. The recent Global Sisters Report (4 May) included an article by Brian Roewe, *Sisters step up efforts to send water filters to Nepal*. It details the work of Sr Lorraine Lauter OSU who is in charge of a drinkable water programme, **Water with Blessings (WWB)**. It is Lorraine Lauter's aim to send Sawyer PointONE water filters to the devastated nation. As she explains: "Mothers will be taught to use these filters so that families have clean water. Mother is a pro. She's a survival pro and she makes sure that her children drink clean water." Lorraine sent out a request for assistance to finance the filters, and we have given a donation in response. WWB is partnering with groups with more established ties in Nepal and these groups will put the WWB strategy into action.

**Kathleen Butler csb**







## Solas Bhride, Kildare Celebrates Earth Day

Solas Bhride marked international Earth Day by planting twenty-one oak saplings in the grounds of the new Centre. It was a special ceremony as it had resonances for many present with the International Bicentenary Brigidine Pilgrimage to Kildare on 7 July 2007. Many will remember that seven oak saplings, nurtured from the Tullow oak, were carried in pilgrimage from Tullow to the green field site in Kildare, with the pilgrims arriving to the sound of bagpipes as the Ritual was concluding at St. Brigid's well. The seven oak saplings were symbolically placed in the ground – all planted for named intentions. The saplings were later taken to 14 Dara Park while the building of the new Centre was in progress. So it was with joyful and grateful hearts that we were able to give the saplings a permanent home on Earth Day 2015. (1)

### Planting Ceremony

All gathered in the Brigid room to listen to a brief talk on oak trees in general. Then all proceeded to the entrance of Solas Bhride, where two of the seven saplings had already been planted, prior to the opening of the Centre, by Brenda Kindregan, Cairde Bhride and Rita Minehan, csb, representing all who would carry the Brigidine tradition into the future. The story of the Tullow oak was told before proceeding to the ground prepared for the saplings. The music of the bagpipes greeted us on arrival. The third sapling was planted by Theresa Kilmurray csb, symbolising 208 years of Brigidine life (2). Michael Leydon, Betty McDonald and John Moloughney, deputising for his brother Fr. Paudie, planted the pilgrim oak (5) as they had walked in pilgrimage from Tullow to Kildare in 2007. The fifth sapling was planted by Evelyn O Hanlon, (4) representing the youth of the world. Annette McCormack, sculptor of the statue of St. Brigid and a bust of Bishop Daniel Delany, planted the sixth sapling representing poets, musicians and artists (3). The seventh sapling representing all who had worked to create the Centre and all who would work in it was planted by Brigidines Mary Minehan and Phil O'Shea (6). Sixteen saplings were planted by members of the local community. The saplings were then blessed with water from St. Brigid's well and encircled with the Brigid flame as we sang "Tread Gently on the Earth." The ceremony concluded with refreshments in the Hospitality Room of the Solas Bhride Centre.

*Phil O'Shea csb*



For more news about developments and programs at the Solas Bhride Centre and Hermitages in Kildare check out their website: [www.solasbhrider.ie](http://www.solasbhrider.ie)







## Endings and Beginnings in Paulstown, Co Kilkenny

On 2 May, Brigidines assembled in Paulstown Convent to formalise its closing after eighty-four years. After light refreshments a very meaningful ritual prepared by Eileen Deegan csb took place. A large St. Brigid's Cross was the centrepiece with a lighted candle at each point. After a reading of a short account of the early history of the Convent, a Walk-About took place, visiting each room. When everyone regathered we sang '*There's A Time To Remember*' by Liam Lawton and individuals shared their memories of time spent at Paulstown. Ninety-four year old Sr. Cathaldus, who taught in Paulstown for many years, came from her nursing home for this occasion. We prayed for forgiveness and healing of memories and reflected on how life brings its share of losses, grieving and letting go. After Scripture readings and a final prayer, Sr Cathaldus blessed everyone with holy water, we sang a hymn of thanksgiving, and then ritually closed the door of the convent. From there we proceeded to 22 Marble Court, the lovely new home of Margaret Walsh csb and Anne Drea csb. We blessed this home and sang '*The Hymn to St Brigid*'. It was a day of mixed emotions especially for those who had lived in Paulstown. However, this was balanced by the joy of another beginning and knowledge that there is still a Brigidine presence in Paulstown. **Triona O'Driscoll csb**



**"There's  
A Time  
For  
Everything."**

**Ecclesiastes 3**





## Family Detention in South Texas: An Interfaith Response

*"You can call it a 'Family Residential Center' but it is a prison. That's not what these women and children deserve."*

These are the words of Leslie Holman, President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. This association along with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, the American Immigration Council, and the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, collectively known as CARA, have joined forces in response to the Immigrant and Customs Enforcement (ICE) significant expansion of its family detention capacity. The recently opened "South Texas Family Residential Center" in Dilley, Texas (about one hour from San Antonio) will have the potential to eventually hold 2400 individuals - while the Center in Karnes City (1 ½ hour drive south of San Antonio) holds 532 and plans to double that number.

In late March 2015, a group of five Catholic and Lutheran bishops visited the Dilley facility and on that same day, a letter calling for the end of the detention of immigrant families was sent to President Obama. It was signed by eighty religious leaders representing the Jewish and Christian faiths communities.

**Today we are called beyond what was a focus largely on charity, to one that makes justice-making for the sake of the Kingdom our absolute priority.**

***Diarmuid O'Murchu***

On April 22, some Brigidines and co-workers travelled to Dilley to take part in an interfaith prayer vigil that called for an end to the practice of family detention and the expansion of more humane alternative programs. This vigil was sponsored by L.C.W.R. Sisters of Mercy, Loreto Community, Columbian JPC, Sojourners, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services, and Disciples of Christian Women's Ministries.

On Friday May 1, Brigidines were one of the sponsors for a community dinner and evening of conversation and education about the detention of Women and Children in South Texas. This event, held at First Presbyterian Church, was organized by the local Interfaith Welcome Coalition and was most informative about the work being done by such groups as RAICES - a local legal services immigration organization which offers pro bono representation programs in the Karnes City Center.

Other volunteers visit the mothers and children and help welcome them upon release by preparing backpacks. Still others offer temporary housing or meet them at the San Antonio bus station and help them on their way to meet family members elsewhere.

Like the hundreds of thousands who drift daily in desperate immigrant ships off the world's shores - these women and children are traumatized by the fear of the unknown and the pain of separation, while living within the harsh confines of detention centers. One quote at the prayer vigil reminded us that a prison bar - even if made of gold - is still a prison bar!

We pray for the day when these bars come down and mothers with their children experience what they really do deserve - a more humane and caring response in their time of great need.

***Teresa Carter csb***



***Brigidine Sisters Teresa Carter, Agnes Oman and Margaret Doyle recently taking part in an interfaith prayer vigil at Dilley, Texas, USA***





## Opening and Blessing of St Brigid's Green, Maroubra



**Marie McLeod, Dorothy Costigan and Faye Kenny - each one has had a long term association with Brigidine education at Maroubra NSW.**

The joy of community was evident when, on 27 February 2015, the Official Opening and Blessing of St Brigid's Green, Maroubra took place. Dorothy Costigan csb, first principal and Marie McLeod, assistant principal of Brigidine High School, Maroubra were present for this special occasion (the aged care facility is directly on the site of the old high school), and Faye Kenny csb and Kathleen Butler csb also attended. The vision for the complex was initiated by Fr Bill Challenor and his Parish Team some years ago; the dream was to provide a home for people in their later years in a familiar community setting - and the dream has become a magnificent reality. Brigidine Sisters in Maroubra Junction and the associated Bay and Beach schools have formed long and lasting friendships with many Maroubra parishioners and those in the wider community over many decades. The Guests of Honour were His Excellency General, the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Lady Cosgrove and His Grace, Most Reverend Anthony Fisher, Catholic Archbishop for the Archdiocese of Sydney, with Rev. William (Fr. Bill) Challenor.

In his address the Archbishop spoke of St Brigid of Kildare, her hospitality and the "home" of her first monastery. He referred to our motto, "Fortiter et Suaviter" as "with determination and in tranquillity", which identifies strongly with the

unfolding of this project. The complex was blessed, including the wall story boards near the entrance, detailing the history of the Brigidine presence here since 1915 in a selection of photographs and text of the site in different decades, and the associated Catholic properties - Holy Family Parish Church, St Aidan's Primary School and Kildare Court.

Howard Smith, the Director of Greengate Property Group, who was responsible for the construction and now for the ongoing management of the property, had cause to be proud of the day's celebration. Howard was enrolled at St. Brigid's Cowra for the Kindergarten Year 1975 and was school captain in 1980 - the beginning of a prestigious career! We are keeping the Brigidine connections strong in Maroubra and we know Brigid will bless this very special house!



**Kathleen Butler csb**



Congratulations to Zita Barron csb from Brigidine House, Randwick, who was recently honoured for her ten years of service to the residents at Daceyville Southern Cross Village.

Zita is on the pastoral care team and visits each Tuesday where she spends time with the residents listening to and supporting them.





## Brigidine Sisters Share Stories with Students at Brigidine College, St Ives



On May 6, 2015, Year 7 girls at Brigidine College St Ives hosted a group of Brigidine sisters at the College. They were: Sr Chanel Sugden, Sr Margaret Daniels, Sr Maureen Keady, Sr Trish Garland, Sr Patricia Buckley, Sr Ann Harrison and Sr Jan O'Neill. Each of the sisters had a significant St Ives story to tell, with most commencing their training in the convent and having some time teaching at the College. The event was organised jointly by Sr Chanel and Mr Bill Gleeson, Assistant Principal Religious Formation.

Following a welcome and prayer in St Brigid's, Sr Chanel introduced each of the sisters. An early photo of each of sister was displayed as each highlighted some memorable moments. These included accounts of their schooling, their vocation as a religious sister and reflections of College past. A Morning Tea concluded the occasion, with Mrs Jane Curran, College Principal and some other staff joining the sisters and the girls. Mrs Curran commented: *"The generosity of the sisters in sharing their stories gave the girls an insight into another time. While the College no longer operates as a novitiate, the stories of the sisters and their lives here enriches our history and gives greater meaning to our modern context."*

The visit complemented the Religious Education program as the girls learn about the Brigidine Tradition. Although the girls had researched the story of the sisters at St Ives and had walked the College Heritage Trail, the personal experience of one-to-one interactions gave the girls the best experience. It was a wonderful connection, one

that both the sisters and the girls thoroughly enjoyed. As one Year 7 student commented:

*"I really loved having the Brigidine Sisters with us today. I feel I got to know the sisters a bit more by listening to their stories of how St Brigid inspired them to make such an amazing commitment in their lives. I was also very interested to meet them personally because my grandfather told me that he is a friend of one of the sisters, and tells me all about the wonderful ladies that they all are. Saint Brigid has inspired me to be the best person that I can be, and by getting to know the sisters more closely I think that I will become a better person by knowing more about the Brigidine story."*

As one of the Sisters commented:

*"It was a pleasure to share with the Year 7 girls and Staff and to be the recipients, once again, of the gracious and generous hospitality always shown to us when we visit the Brigidine College."*

For future years, the College hopes to incorporate the sisters' visit as a regular event on the calendar.

**Bill Gleeson, Assistant Principal,  
Religious Formation, Brigidine College, St Ives.**



**Brigidine Sisters with some staff members  
of Brigidine College St Ives**



## Recent Brigidine Celebrations in New Zealand

### Year for Consecrated Life:

As part of the celebration of the Year for Consecrated Life religious congregations were recently invited to contribute to the annual Wellington Archdiocesan Report under the headings of:

- ♦ Grateful remembrance of the recent past
- ♦ Embracing the future with hope, and
- ♦ Living the present with passion.

A request was made by the organising committee to use the Brigidine contribution on *the grateful remembrance of the recent past* at the Holy Hour for Consecrated Life held in the Wellington Catholic Cathedral on 13 March 2015, where it was read by Frances Gibbs csb.



### Grateful remembrance of the recent past:

Our recent past has been one of grief and loss but with that comes the remembrance of all the wonderful work done by our early pioneers and the remarkable people they were. Our most recent loss was with the death of Sr Maura Phelan, the last of our Irish Brigidines in New Zealand. As a young woman she left her family, her home and her homeland to work for the kingdom in a distant land. She was an excellent teacher who taught in most of the schools founded by the Brigidines, and as Mother Columcille she pioneered Catholic education in the Porirua Basin creating a very successful school in two surplus army huts in Kenepuru Drive, Porirua. This first St Francis Xavier's began in 1953 with two Sisters, 88 pupils, no desks and no equipment but from those beginnings sprang three primary schools and a college. We are greatly indebted to Sr Maura and to the many others like her – faithful, generous women who spent their lives educating children and opening minds and hearts to the knowledge and love of God.



Art by Raewyn Harris, NZ

### Embrace the future with hope:

As the old form of Brigidine Religious Life dies away we are left with the 'essence' to carry us into the future.

- ♦ Faithfulness to our Catholic heritage
- ♦ Faith in a provident God – always part of our story
- ♦ Love that is inclusive, hospitable, human and joyful
- ♦ A strong desire and responsibility to respond to the cry of the poor
- ♦ An ecumenical spirit
- ♦ A shared history of practical justice and service
- ♦ Celebrating all that is good with joy and gratitude
- ♦ A sense of mission and a spirit of mission.
- ♦ The hope that the Brigidine values will continue on in those we have taught and in the schools we have founded.

### Live the present with passion:

There are only six Brigidines left in the Archdiocese, but all of these Sisters continue in some form of mission – whether it be in parishes or in retirement villages and rest-homes. All are valued members of the parishes to which they belong, with varying degrees of responsibility including School Board membership, committees etc. Our homes are used for prayer group and other parish and pastoral area gatherings.

We trust that, in spite of age and infirmity, we are “bearing vigorous and joyful witness before the world to the holiness and vitality present in so many of those called to follow Jesus in the consecrated life” (Pope Francis).

**Anne Phibbs csb**



## Kildare Ministries' First Pilgrimage



In September this year, twenty-four Australians will travel to Ireland for the first pilgrimage under the auspices of Kildare Ministries. Given that Kildare Ministries is a joint venture of Australian Brigidine and Victorian Presentation education and community works, the organising committee has developed a programme that will explore something of both traditions. In an effort to be all encompassing, pilgrims will visit sites of significance to both the ancient and more modern worlds. Visits to pre-Christian as well as early Christian sites will help us gain a deeper understanding of Celtic spirituality. This will give a foundation to our exploration of the Brigit/Brigid traditions.

**(Left)** The pilgrims met in early May for the first time and all are very keen to start the trip! They are excited about the proposed visits to Ballygriffin and Cork, places of importance for the Presentation Sisters as well as visits to Daniel Delany's birthplace in Paddock and Solas Bhríde and surrounds in Kildare. We will be based at Teach Bhríde in Tullow for five nights before concluding the pilgrimage in Dublin with a session facilitated by Phil O'Shea csb and Frances Crowe pbvm. The three past visits to Ireland have all been wonderful and we are anticipating another success. Thanks in advance to those who have already been so accommodating of our plans!

**Marguerite Buckley (Development Officer, Kildare Ministries)**

## The End of An Era For Primary Teaching Sisters in Ireland

The 65th AGM of the Association of Primary Teaching Sisters took place in March 2015 at Bewleys Hotel, Ballsbridge, Dublin with approximately two hundred religious sisters accepting the invitation to attend. The theme for the Conference was '*Celebrate With Joy*'.

The first session of the day was conducted by Gerry O'Connell from the Marino Institute of Education. It was a reflective and inspiring session. Those gathered appreciated the poem, *Love After Love*, by Derek Walcott which Gerry used and his beautifully prepared powerpoint presentation on *The Presence of God* by Joseph Mary Plunkett.

The second session addressed the issue of *Graceful Retirement* and was facilitated by Professor Joe Dunne, until recently a principal lecturer at St Patrick's College, Dublin City University. His input invited participants to reflect on the fact that while they were indeed letting go of something very precious, by assimilating the loss, they could move forward through those transitions to rich new seasons of life, faith and service.

During the Gathering, the President of the Association, Mary Collins, sbd gave an address in which she outlined a brief history of the association, paying tribute to the good work of previous presidents, including Brigidine Sister Joseph Casey. She also noted the many changes that have taken place in the primary school sector in Ireland over the years. Given that the membership of this Association of Primary Teaching Sisters had dwindled to twenty-eight sisters (some of whom are due to retire in the Summer of this year) those at this Gathering voted that the Association be wound up (in accordance with the Constitutions of the Association). This was a historical day, one to remember, and it was good to have been there and had a share in the decision.

**Triona O'Driscoll csb**





## A Ritual to Mark New Ways of Being A Community in Victoria



**Maree Holt csb lights the Community Candle at the beginning of the Ritual**



**Cecilia Merrigan csb decorated the door through which we ceremoniously stepped into a new beginning**



**Bernadette Nihill csb and others in procession to make the commitment**



**“We commit to standing together, working together and moving together with open minds and a joyful spirit.” (Words from the Closure Ritual in Victoria, March 2015)**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015, Victorian Brigidines gathered in Kildara Centre for a ritual to mark the closure of the Victorian Province and to celebrate the evolving mission and life of the Victorian Community. Fifty-six sisters celebrated in word and song the 129 years as a Province and entered with renewed commitment through ‘the open door’ to the challenges of the ongoing life as the Victorian Community. Following the ritual, the Victorian Community Leadership Team presented each with the document *“Engaging with Life – Our Response to the Call to the Mission of Jesus Now and into the Future”*. As a Community, we believe there is great energy for the work of the gospel amongst us all regardless of age, health status and abilities. The key focus of our discussion was around how we reverence, honour and recognise each Brigidine woman as contributing uniquely to the mission of Jesus through active engagement with life. It was not lost on those present that the closing ritual and the “Engaging with Life” document had at their core an adaptation from Deuteronomy 30: 19- 20: *“And so today, and every day, I offer you two choices: blessing or curse, healing or harming, life or death. In everything you do, say and think, therefore choose life!”* At our Community Gathering in May we further explored our call to mission as we look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with confidence and hope.

**Margaret Fyfe csb**



## Celebrating Working with Partners in Ministry



(Centre) Monica Lang, Manager of the Brigidine Ministry Centre, Albert Park with her husband, Michael, her daughters and Margaret Fyfe csb at the recent evening celebrating Partnerships in Ministry



Victorian Community Healthcare Co-ordinators Joy Groeneweg and Lynn Goodall in conversation with others at the Gathering with Partners in Ministry

**Constant considerations include the reality of our diminishment and the creation of opportunities for partnership and collaboration.**  
2011 CF Booklet, pg 8



**“Let us go forward on the road that has led us to where we are.”**

**Phil 3:16**



**Rupa Rai**



www.carithongau  
People are NOT for sale

It is feared that following the recent earthquake in Nepal, human traffickers will be targeting thousands of vulnerable girls and young women particularly in the rural areas.

### **“Lifting The Lid On Human Trafficking”**

In May, Caritas Australia, in partnership with ACRATH, held an engaging evening of conversation led by Rupa Rai. Rupa held the position of Anti Trafficking and Safe Migration Consultant for Caritas Nepal. She worked with the organization from its establishment in 1990. Through the years she developed and implemented programs on the prevention of human trafficking, unsafe migration and gender violence. Her work with Caritas Nepal and continuing engagement with survivors of trafficking, with migrant workers and women living in remote villages has given her unique insights. It has been estimated by the UN and local NGOs in Nepal that between 12,000 and 15,000 girls a year are trafficked from Nepal. Some are taken overseas eg to South Korea and as far as South Africa but the majority are taken to work in appalling conditions in Indian brothels. Rupa shared how working with vulnerable and marginalized women inspires her as she witnesses their transformation towards personal empowerment. A number of Brigidines attended the session at the Brigidine Ministry Centre, Albert Park.





## More Good News From Around the Congregation



**Bishop Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin met Brigidine Sisters Martha Kavanagh and Vianney Pepper at Evening Prayer at the Carlow Cathedral.**



**In March, the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project held an evening on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers. Dana Affleck, pictured here with Delia Bradshaw, Chair of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project Council, was the guest speaker. Dana has established a program - to raise awareness of how life actually is for refugees seeking asylum in Australia. [www.roadtorefuge.com](http://www.roadtorefuge.com)**



- Brigid's Well 2015 in Perth, West Australia**
- Feb 18** Patient Care - Fr Joe Parkinson, Bioethics Centre
  - Mar 18** Presentation on a visit to the Holy Land - Seminarians from St Charles Seminary
  - Apr 16** "These are a Few of My Favourite Things." Janet Holmes a Court. OA
  - May 20** "Towards God" - Thoughts About Prayer. - Dr. Margaret Malone SCG
  - Jun 17** One Heart Many Voices Report - Joan Smith RSM
  - Jul 15** Same Sex Attraction - Fr Joe Parkinson, Bioethics Centre
  - Aug 19** Church's Moral Teaching, - Fr Sean Fernandez, Notre Dame
  - Sept 16** Synod - Fr Joe Parkinson
  - Oct 21** Fr Kevin and Seminarians from St. Charles Seminary
  - Nov /Dec** End of Year Celebration

**Congratulations to Bernice Tonkin csb who co-ordinates this rich program in Perth**



**Above: Brigidine Sisters - Faye Kenny Zita Barron, Clare Keady, Kathleen Butler and Kal Keady were participants in the recent Reading Group led by Jan O'Neill csb at Brigidine House Randwick. They have been exploring the new cosmology in the text "The Rebirthing of God" by John Philip Newell.**

**Left: Solar panels, which were originally at one of the Brigidine houses in Mentone, were recently recycled and installed at St. Brigid's, Malvern. These will be a great asset to the community and to the environment with the use of clean energy and a reduction in our dependency on fossil fuels.**





## **Our Catholic Parishes - Then - Now - And? A Pastoral Associate's Perspective**

Recently an elderly lady in the parish asked me why I was retiring from the full-time position as pastoral associate in the parish. By way of explanation I told her that our new parish priest was in my Grade 5 class back in the early 1960's and that this year he was celebrating his 62nd birthday. "Oh dear Sr. Moira, you don't look your age at all," was her exclamation.

So it is that after more than fifty years in the daily ministry of local parish church communities, I find myself reflecting on the ebb and flow of the life of people, places and events over those years. At every stage of life and each place of ministry I have been gifted by sharing in the lives of both young and older people. They have all been absorbed in life and a myriad of experiences. I have always found the sheer goodness of people and the graciousness of the human spirit both uplifting and moving.

In more recent years, especially in this time of Pope Francis' leadership, the vision, purpose and role of the traditional Catholic parish needs to be renewed. Parishes today need to be rebuilt in light of the patterns of life today and the issues of today's world. Like so many aspects of our early 21st Century world, the shape of life is undergoing the 'fast lane of change'. This is calling for on-going adaptations and creativity as the global community embraces new inter-cultural and intergenerational challenges.

The traditional Catholic parish as I've experienced it has had a Sacramental base. Within this, most entered the faith community in infancy through a traditional Catholic family and journeyed in faith through adulthood in a variety of ways. While Baptism as an infant or young child is still the entrance experience into the Catholic Community for many, I sense change occurring and am aware of others experiencing new entrance points into the Community. Young people from their teenage years seem to be drawn to taking up the Gospel message of justice and 'life to the full' as most relevant for their world and reality. To me, this allows for the Eucharist tradition at the heart of our Catholic Community to be integrated more closely into the ways young adults and families will live out in new

ways the sacraments and the whole Christian tradition.

In 2006, I heard Dr. David Tacey, a Senior University Lecturer in Australian Spirituality. He spoke of 'tradition' and some of the conventions which operate within and around 'established traditions'. He suggested that 'traditions' live on only when the conventions evolve and adapt. Left without newer approaches to cultural and generational practices, the 'tradition' will die out. This wisdom made a profound impression on me. In these past few years, I have been reflecting with parish communities on how they can adapt, open out and look for newer approaches so that the traditional Catholic parish might have new life, energy, purpose and even a possible future for people.

At this time in my Brigidine ministry I hope to continue searching out ways in which our faith Communities might look to new forms, new conventions and shapes and above all a vision which will embrace all peoples to come into a Eucharistic Community where, as Pope Francis invites us "to be something more as communities for our time and place", and to renew and reshape a life-giving pathway forward.

***Moira Broderick csb***



**Our future lies within the roots  
of the seeds we have planted.**

**Cecelia Weir**



**Catherine Kelly csb**

**1936 - 2015**

Catherine was born in Tullow in 1936, the daughter of Catherine and James Kelly and sister to Jim, Rita, Mike and Paddy. She had many friends at school and excelled in art and English as well as drama. In her family home there were always books and papers and they would often listen to the radio. In 1954 Catherine left her father, family and the land of her mother to join the Brigidines in Melbourne, Australia. She travelled with the late Kathleen Desmond aboard the *Strathnaver*. Who knows what emotions were theirs as they tossed and turned on that long sea voyage! The local Tullow paper published an article on her departure saying that the talent of young Catherine would be greatly missed and her father wrote a letter to her saying how proud he was of her and the path that she had chosen. From the novitiate, Catherine studied at the Brigidine Teachers' College, Malvern before beginning a long and illustrious ministry in education. In her fifty-eight years of professed Brigidine life, Catherine lived in eighteen different communities in diverse geographic locations around Victoria and taught in a number of Brigidine secondary schools. She was a gifted and generous teacher, who worked hard to inspire her students with a love of learning. Over the years she played a significant role in forming many young teachers and educational colleagues with whom she shared her passion for education. After many years teaching in a school setting Catherine became a member of the Brigidine Resource Team, supporting principals and teachers, particularly in the areas of curriculum development. The opportunity to study in Lancaster, the United Kingdom was a precious time for Catherine and very influential in her life. There she studied Scripture and the theory and practice of Religious Education. In the post-Vatican 2 era these studies enabled her to develop a solid foundation upon which to build her lived commitment to, and her teaching of the Gospel values of justice and compassion. For a time after her studies, Catherine lectured at Christ College Teachers' College and at Yarra Theological Union. Throughout all these years, Catherine maintained strong and lively connections with her family who had spread to England, America and Sweden and they remember her as having always made them feel special.

For the past fourteen years, Catherine, together with Brigid Arthur csb, were co-ordinators of the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project based in Albert Park. Catherine devoted most of her time to working with women, men and children coming to Australia for protection. A significant part of this ministry was supporting young male asylum seekers who live next door in our former convent at Ardeer. Catherine shared this ministry with Sr Martin Jones csb. As Pamela Curr from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre summed it up, "I remember ringing Sr Catherine one morning in 2005 asking if she had a room for an 18 year old boy who had just been flown to Melbourne from Baxter Detention camp and needed support as he was a long way from home and family in a new country... With help from Catherine and the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project this young man is now an Australian citizen. He bravely defied the odds and brought his family from danger and now has two beautiful children born in Australia... We say goodbye but we will never forget Sister Catherine's stalwart sense of justice, her kindness and readiness to extend friendship and warmth to those in need." Catherine died peacefully on 12th March having been diagnosed with terminal cancer only 4 weeks previously. Catherine, you have lit a fire and we will keep it burning!

***(Combined from many tributes including those by Anne Boyd csb and Stina Kelly Von Essen)***





**Mary Singer**  
**1915 - 2015**

Who can do justice to this valiant woman? I can only offer my memories of Mary. I first lived in community with Mary, at Scarborough, Queensland in the 1970's when Mary was in her heyday! She was big in every way! She had a big laugh, a big mind and intellect, a big sense of humour and of the ridiculous and she was big on hyperbole. There was nothing small about her. Mary was a free spirit and allowed and encouraged other to be free. She was an excellent teacher of English literature, could quote from a wide range of prose and poetry – each quote fitting every time and season. As well as teaching all day she was mistress of the boarding school. This was an onerous task for there were over ninety boarders each year. That is except for one year when the Sister at enrolling time, put down the naught and forgot to carry the one – so we ended up with one hundred and ten boarders! However, Mary was unfazed. Mary used the “strength with gentleness” approach when the de la Salle boarders came to join the girls for Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, swimming carnivals, dances, Saturday night films. In many ways this time at Scarborough, living and working with Mary, was “living on the wild side”.

Thirty years later Mary returned to Randwick. Her health had deteriorated and both her hearing and sight were impaired. However she had no intention of allowing her mind, intellect or memory to deteriorate. Mary was a prolific letter writer. She watched the news several times a day, followed the tennis and her beloved Broncos rugby team and often sat up past midnight, rejoicing in, or bemoaning the fortunes of the Australian Cricket Team. She had the Sydney Morning Herald delivered to her room daily and above all she loved reading books. Mary always had three or four books by her side and a few more by her bed. When Mary heard that I visited the Randwick Library often, she asked me to supply her with books. I hesitated, trying to recall all of the classical writers and asked if she would like Shakespeare, Dickens, Austin or Bronte? I offered her a Wilkie Collins. "I read them years ago!" she said emphatically. So I provided her with a wide range of novels and biographies. Her friends also supplied her with books. To my delight, when she returned a book she always included a card. This usually took the form of the back of a used Christmas or birthday card on which Mary would give a short critique of the book. Some were beautiful, learned comments and others were hilarious. I have a box of these and I must confess, I had at least one serious failure when I literally “judged a book by its cover”. I didn't know the author but the print was good and it had an attractive jacket. Mary returned the book and wrote: “Worse than a Mills & Boon, but I read it to the end because I wanted to know which brother she married. It's rubbish, don't read it”. Some of her favourites reads were Fr Ronald Rolheiser's spiritual essays and she delighted in our late Brigidine, Ros Marks' writing of the loving God of nature. Mary was a faithful, prayerful woman who was patient and cheerful in her illness. She would often say: “The worst thing I have ever done is to live past ninety”. She had a cartoon on her wall of one very old lady saying to an aged companion “I'm so old my friends in heaven must think I never made it”. I conclude with one of Mary's favourite quotes from the poet Robert Browning:

*Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be;  
The last of life for which the first was made.  
Our lives are in his hands who said 'a whole I planned youth shows but half'.  
Trust God, see all, be not afraid. Robert Browning.*

**Eugenie McGrath csb**



## An Invitation to Reflect During the UN International Year of Light

"I love the imagination of light: how gradually light will build a mood for the eye to discover something new in a familiar mountain. This glimpse serves to deepen the presence of the mountain and remind the eye that surface can be subtle and surprising. Gathered high in silence and stillness, the mountain is loaded with memory that no mind or word can reach. Light never shows the same mountain twice. Only the blindness of habit convinces us that we continue to live in the same place, that we see the same landscape. In truth, no place ever remains the same because light has no mind for repetition; it adores difference. Through its illuminations it strives to suggest the silent depths that hide in the dark.



Light is always more fragile at a threshold. An island is an edged place, a tense threshold between ocean and sky, between land and light... The collusion of cloud, rain, light and landscape is always surprising. Within the space of one morning, a whole sequence of different landscapes can appear outside a window... the place might become dense with darkening, then a cloud might open and a single ray of light will drench a gathering of stones to turn them into oracular presence. Or light might tease the serious face of a mountain with crazy geometry of shadow. Some mornings it seems the dawn cannot wait to break for the light to come out and play with the stillness of the landscape. Such light offers a continual feast for the eyes...

Light over a landscape is never a simple brightness; it is mixed and muted. Clouds love to play with light... The visual effect is often breathtaking. Light is the great priestess of landscape. Deftly it searches out unnoticed places, corners of fields, the shadow-veils of certain bushes, the angled certainty of stones; it can slink low behind a stone wall turning spaces between the stones into windows of gold... Unable to penetrate the earth, light knows how to tease suggestions of depth from surface. The persuasions of light bring us frequent mirrors that afford us a glimpse into the mystery that dwells in us."

**John O'Donohue**, *Divine Beauty*, pg 34-35

- ♦ *Spend some time 'watching' at dawn or at dusk and receiving the mysterious gift of light unique to this particular day?*
- ♦ *Focus on one aspect of the light at this time. What is 'the great priestess of landscape' revealing to you today? Take some time to give thanks for the glimpse it is offering into the mystery that dwells in us.*

### **A BEAUTY BLESSING**

*May stillness in stone to silence wed  
May your heart be somewhere a God might dwell.*

*As a river flows in ideal sequence  
May your soul discover time is presence.*

*As the moon absolves the dark of distance  
May thought-light console your mind with brightness.*

*May the breath of light awaken colour  
May the dawn anoint your eyes with wonder.*

*As spring rain softens the earth with surprise  
May your winter places be kissed by light.*

*As the ocean dreams to the joy of dance  
May the grace of change bring you elegance.*

*As clay anchors a tree in light and wind  
May your outer life grow from peace within.*

*As twilight fills night with bright horizons  
May Beauty await you at home beyond.*

**John O'Donohue**