



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

OCTOBER 2015



"The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely".

Pope Francis

(Laudato Si')



Message from Congregational Leadership Team

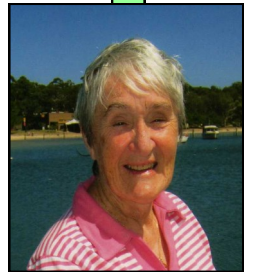
Images of the body of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi being brought to the Turkish coast on 1 September are seared into our hearts and memories. The world was shocked into an outpouring of expressions of solidarity shown in the public outcry that something must be done and symbolised at candlelight vigils across the globe. Initially, the extended hands of generous welcome and practical support by the people of Austria and of Germany became a ray of hope as the horror of the plight of Syrian refugees impacted our psyches.

Once again humanity demonstrated that *'We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other (Laudato Si' 208)*. Was this a sign of a new 'globalisation of compassion'? As we know from personal experience, communities of care and real commitment can grow out of tragedy: we experience support at the time of an untimely death; like-minded people of all persuasions band together to address a need or injustice such as youth suicide, violence against women or human trafficking; grassroots interfaith justice-making groups form in response to natural disasters.

However, these needs and causes need lasting solutions. So too does the plight of the Syrian refugees and the thousands of other asylum seekers who are seeking a humane response from governments and citizens alike. In the wake of little Aylan's death we witness the argy-bargy of political arguments about who will accept what number of asylum seekers, on what conditions and visas and even who can build stronger fences and have more stringent border controls. It is salutary that Pope Francis warns against the dangers of these positions which he suggests arise from *"sustaining a lifestyle which excludes others ... a globalization of indifference (that) has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own (Evangelii Gaudium. 54)"*. This has not been the case in response to Aylan's death. Are we at a turning point in world consciousness?

This tragedy, and the many tragedies we are bombarded with daily in the media, make one ask, "Can we as the human community truly let God's loving kindness break through?" Ancient wisdom in Deutero-Isaiah has God saying *"In overflowing anger for a moment, I hid my face from you, but with everlasting kindness (hesed) I will have compassion (racham) on you."* (Isaiah:54:6). How might this biblical concept of 'hesed' inform our thinking and acting today? The depth of meaning of 'hesed' is difficult to translate as it encompasses such attributes as love, grace and mercy as well as loving kindness. It is a quality that moves someone to act for the good of someone else without considering 'what's in it for me, for us, for our nation'. 'Hesed' is what Brueggemann described as *'a tilt in mercy towards the most needy'* and includes acts of mercy and kindness by those more powerful for the benefit of the weaker party.

This is a far cry from the way in which powerful, rich nations address many of the complex questions and challenges of our day: asylum seekers, international debt, food security, climate justice, gender inequality, forced migration, the plight of small island states who are on the verge of moving their whole population to other places as their country is submerged, to name but a few. It might be a pious hope for the future of humanity and the planet that rich and powerful nations and people will be moved to act with generosity and compassion that goes beyond self-interest. But as Pope Francis challenges the human community *"We need to strengthen the conviction that*





Message from Congregational Leadership Team

we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference.” (Laudato Si’ 52). We might ask and pray for that ‘hesed’ - kindness and compassion - to abound.

It has been so encouraging to have the leadership of Pope Francis challenging every Catholic parish, every religious community and every monastery in Europe to provide sanctuary for a Syrian family in this current time of crisis. He reiterated this call by announcing that the two parishes in the Vatican would be welcoming refugees. Maybe those of us beyond European borders can take this challenge to heart too?

Likewise Pope Francis’s leadership in presenting the world with his challenging encyclical *Laudato Si’* gives us hope and invites us as faithful followers of Jesus to ecological conversion. We are called to solidarity with marginalised people and with the exploited earth - ‘to practise compassion and justice for humanity and the earth.’ Across the world, groups are gathering to study, reflect and plumb the depths of Pope Francis’s inspiring words.

In the coming December we will be invited by Pope Francis to participate in an extraordinary Jubilee year. This Holy Year of Mercy will be an opportunity to celebrate God’s mercy and to live as Jesus instructed us: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Lk 6:36)”. How timely! Perhaps the heart-rending events of our time and Francis’ leadership will impel us talk, pray and act to build the ‘globalisation of compassion’.

Louise Cleary

Mary Hattery

Kathleen Butler

Claire Griffin

Congregational Leadership Team

Preparation for the Congregational Forum 2016

The 2016 Congregational Forum will be held in Tullow 15-31 May,
with the theme - *This Graced Moment: Divine Energy Animating Fresh Possibilities.*

In coming months Communities will be gathering to discern and elect delegates and continue engaging in the Forum preparations. A Forum is a significant time in the Congregation’s journey and we have substantial matters to address about our mission and life. We invite all our sisters and our colleagues, associates and co-workers to join in prayer across Brigidine circles during this phase of preparation.

**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.**



UNANIMA Update

At a session at Brigidine House Randwick by Margaret Fyfe csb representing Caritas Australia, a Brigidine sister asked the question which must cross our minds and stir our hearts daily in light of today's situation of multiple global tragedies: **“What can I do? How can I help?”**

In recent weeks Brigidines have made some attempt to answer these questions in practical ways when considering the global context more intentionally. Across the Congregation, our Brigidine women (and also colleagues, friends and associates) joined together in September for reflection and with personal donations to an initiative, *Water with Blessings*.

The initiative headed by Lorraine Lauter OSU trains “water women” to use simple technology (a water filter, like that used in dialysis and clean plastic storage barrels) to bring clean drinking water to communities. Donations gathered will enable further development of the programme in Liberia, West Africa.



‘Water Women’ being trained to bring clean drinking water to their communities

Another outreach of our Brigidine Common Project Fund was a donation in support of an indigenous women's initiative in Western Sydney, **Baabayn**. This local outreach “grew” from the wisdom of a small group of indigenous ladies who saw that, when Aboriginal persons and/or families were in distress, a response required appropriate indigenous elements and understandings when offering support or finding solutions towards healing. The group has grown in its activities as it works to bring healing to those in need.



Recently Baabayn gave a presentation at Brigidine College, St Ives. One of the ladies told me the College was so hospitable, the staff and students friendly and open to Baabayn's hopes. This is certainly creative interconnection indeed: UNANIMA International directions, Australian and international contexts, and interest and cooperation expressed in different aspects of the ongoing Brigidine story 2015: “Do everything in a spirit of love...” (Dr Daniel Delany)

***Kathleen Butler csb
UNANIMA International.***

***In October, Doris Testa csb
from Victoria will spend two
weeks visiting UNANIMA as
part of her sabbatical time
from lecturing in social
work at the Victoria
University.***





Jubilee Year - 'Merciful Like The Father'

In March this year, Pope Francis announced an Extraordinary Holy Year to start on 8th December 2015 and conclude on 20th November 2016. This Holy Year will be dedicated to a theme close to the Pope's heart: Mercy.

The biblical passage for the Holy Year's theme is from chapter 6 of Luke's gospel - **"Be merciful as your Father is merciful."** (Luke 6:36) This theme serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure.

When announcing the Holy Year, Pope Francis said:

"I am convinced that the whole Church will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and making fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and every woman of our time."

- What opportunities does this time offer us as we live in the spirit of Daniel Delany - *'Love God and live together in peace and charity'?*
- As we consider some of the critical questions of our time, how might we as Brigidines use our many gifts of time, energy and resources to reflect to those most forgotten and marginalized the mercy and care of a loving God?



HEADLINES CHALLENGING US TO BE TRULY MERCIFUL:

"We just wanted a future": Migrants stuck in Budapest.

"We've been here five days. No food, no sleep - no place to sleep, no anything," a Syrian refugee says.

Australia send desperate and dispirited asylum seekers to Nauru detention centre described by Save the Children Staff as "a boiling pot of despair."

Children and young adults risk lives to cross the US/Mexican border.

God of mercy, open our hearts and minds, and those of world leaders so that there may be safety, peace and fullness of life for all.



The body of a 3 year old Aylan Kurdi was recently found washed up on a beach in Turkey. Lord have mercy on his father and on us all.

PRAYER FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the woman they called an adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.



Solidarity With South Sudan

Solidarity with South Sudan has grown and seen a number of significant changes in recent time. Tragically, a pointless and very bloody internal conflict erupted in December 2013. Once again, many people of South Sudan began to endure the agony of death, displacement, hunger and fear. The situation in 2014 required us to look at the new reality, civil war, and discern how to respond.

Notwithstanding the senseless conflict in parts of the country, morale among our members has remained very high and the delivery of services has continued very productively. The Pastoral team has successfully delivered the programmes planned for 2014 and have also taken on a very significant new raft of services in terms of trauma healing and assisting priests and religious return to their ministries. One of our priests has been living in the UN camp at Malakal ministering to the needs of the people between the delivery of various services.

We have actively engaged with other agencies in a UNICEF-sponsored emergency project to bring primary education to children in the areas of conflict.



Sr Margaret Scott and child in South Sudan

The main work of Solidarity continues to be capacity building in Wau at the Catholic Health Training Institute, the Yambio Teacher Training College, the agriculture project in Rimenze and Pastoral Work out of Juba. While the Malakal campus has remained inoperable, the Yambio campus has now grown to its originally planned capacity of four full-time streams, to six would be more true.

Pope Francis recently called on religious to “Wake up the world.” Perhaps it would be truer to say that the poor who suffer from injustice are “waking up the world”.

Our task is to accompany and be in solidarity with the people of South Sudan in this time of desperate need. (Solidarity with South Sudan).

Br Bill Firman, Executive Director



Sponsors and supporters include many Religious Congregations, private donors and institutions.





Solidarity With South Sudan



South Sudan gained independence in 2011 after decades of civil war and conflict. This young country, with a population of 11.8 million, needs support in many aspects of life - from improving literacy in young people to improving health standards for mothers and babies, from introducing sustainable farming methods to trauma healing in local communities and laying foundations for a lasting peace.

Solidarity works to accompany and empower the people of South Sudan, help to heal the wounds of past conflicts and guide the South Sudanese to a better future. Solidarity pays special attention to ensure that South Sudanese girls have equal access to education and training.

Solidarity is currently supported by over 260 congregations, private donors and international agencies with funding, personnel and expertise.

Together these congregations work in harmony to achieve a common objective and to build long-lasting peace in South Sudan.



TRAINING NURSES AND MIDWIVES:

At the Catholic Health Training Institute run by **Solidarity** in Wau, students live in and undertake a three year program of study and clinical practice. There are only 158 registered nurses in all of South Sudan. 49 of them have been trained by **Solidarity**.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE:

Many faced and continue to face the threat of famine. **Solidarity** works alongside farmers to provide them with skills to become independent. The sustainable agriculture projects also provide fresh produce to the health-training centre in Wau.

TEACHER TRAINING:

With such high rates of illiteracy, teaching local people how to teach children and young adults basic skills is vital. **Solidarity** is committed to training current and future teachers to improve literacy in their local communities. The teacher training centre in Yambio has courses for both teachers and young adults who want to become teachers.

BRIGIDINE SUPPORT FOR SOLIDARITY:

During recent team meetings in Tullow, the Congregational Leadership Team made a decision to make a donation of \$4000 AUD to **Solidarity with South Sudan** on behalf of all Brigidines. This donation was made from our Common Project Fund. We invite you to pray for all involved in this great work of Solidarity for justice.

PASTORAL WORK:

Conflicts past and present mean there is a need for trauma healing and peace-building. Solidarity reaches out to local people with initiatives involving clergy and catechists who organize different workshops and co-ordinated pastoral visits.

For more information:

www.solidarityssudan.org



Celebrating the Gift of Years in New Zealand

The New Zealand Sisters gathered in Johnsonville on 24 June to celebrate Sister Cyprian Wilson's 90th birthday. A well-attended Mass was the occasion for a great out-pouring of love and affection towards Sr Cyprian from the parishioners of Saints Peter and Paul's Parish and the children from St Brigid's School. The Mass was followed by a finger-food luncheon where more tributes were paid to Sister Cyprian.

The young people from Challenge 2000 - a programme for youth with its head-quarters next-door to the convent - captured many of the characteristics of Sr. Cyprian when they sang the following song to the tune of Edelweiss:

Cyprian, Cyprian, beautiful Sister of Brigid!
Smiling face, warm embrace always happy
to see us. 90 years ago, born this day and so
we say together, Cyprian, Cyprian, Birthday
Blessings upon you.

In '43, a postulant, a little black dress and
white collar. In '44, a novitiate, then
professed and a sister forever. Strength and
gentleness guides her soul, guides her life
forever. Cyprian, Cyprian, Birthday
Blessings upon you.

For many years you taught the young at
St Brigid's school here in J'ville. Maths and
books, songs and looks but always so
kind and so gentle. Visiting elderly and the
sick, if we need it quick! You've got it!
Cyprian, Cyprian, Birthday blessings upon
you!

So positive about the youth, our Masses and
all of our dramas; Faith lived through love
from Heaven above, we thank you for all of
your service. You're a great supporter of the
house next door, with food for the poor to
help them. Cyprian, Cyprian, Birthday
Blessings upon you. Cyprian, Cyprian,
beautiful Sister of Brigid.

Smiling face, warm embrace, always happy
to see us. 90 years ago born this day and so
we sing together: Cyprian, Cyprian, birthday
blessings upon you!

A second celebration took place in the Convent when the Sisters and a few special friends met to enjoy a pleasant afternoon together, and a third celebration was with Sr. Cyprian's family in Marton. On all occasions the blessing that Sr. Cyprian has been to the Brigidines, to the Johnsonville parish and to her family was warmly acknowledged.

Anne Phibbs csb



Brigidine Sisters, Cyprian Wilson and Helena Fouhey - our two Brigidine nonagenarians in New Zealand where they have given generous service to many across the years.



Cyprian Wilson csb, Frances Gibbs csb and Monica Landy csb join the celebrations for Cyprian's 90th birthday. These three sisters originally came to the Brigidines from Johnsonville

To insist on living until we die may be one of life's greatest virtues. It is easy at any age simply to stop, to be satisfied with what is, to refuse to be more. But when we go on working - at something, for some reason, for someone, for something greater than ourselves - when we go on giving ourselves away right to the very end, we have lived a full life. That is in fact the very definition of fullness of life.

Joan Chittester, *The Gift of Years*, pg 149



The 2015 Annual Event for The Care for the Earth Group in Ireland



The annual outing of the Care for The Earth Group to the Killamuck Bog was held on 16 July.

Some strode off briskly down this amazing shamrock carpeted pathway enjoying the experience as they walked. Others sauntered leisurely, taking time to compare the flora, its beauty and diversity, exchanging knowledge and learning all the while. Some took advantage of the conveniently placed rustic seating, taking in the peace and tranquillity of the place, even if umbrellas had to be raised every now and again. As participants arrived in dribs and drabs and all dressed for the threatening weather, Angela Phelan csb waited at the carpark to guide everyone to the entrance to Killamuck Bog. Soon we could be seen all along the wooded walk.

Killamuck Bog is a developing eco-tourist attraction and an initiative of the local people who have collaborated with Bord Na Mona, Laois Partnerships and other funding bodies. Work has been done to upgrade the pathway. Both a narrow and wider boardwalks have been constructed out over the raised bog which is in the process of being regenerated. Attractive information boards giving details of the flora and fauna in the area all help to make the walk not only enjoyable but informative as well.

A recent television program aired in Ireland spoke of the key role raised areas such as this bog play - they are an environmental feature as important as the rainforests.

As we stood and paused above the bog on the windy boardwalk during our time together it was inspiring to recall how this bog assists in the reduction of carbon emissions and in the atmosphere. There was very enjoyable chatter along the way as each walker caught up with others and shared bits and pieces of knowledge about the diverse woodlands. It was evident that work continues by a dedicated group of people to maintain and further develop this important environmental initiative in Laois.

After a hurried group photo of all on the boardwalk, rain finally sent the group back to cars and on to the Brigidine House in Carlow Road, Abbeyleix, where a delicious lunch was waiting for us. We were all warmly welcomed by Brigidine Sisters Mary Hiney and Margaret Creagh. Steaming tea and coffee along with healthy salads and delicious homemade cake helped us warm up and dry out. There was also the opportunity for further chat and sharing in the comfort of the warm home. Everyone who participated in the 2015 Care for the Earth Annual Outing offers a very big thank you to all involved in organizing the event.

Angela Dunne





ACRATH's 10th Advocacy Visit to Canberra

On Sunday 6 September, I joined ten others in Canberra for the 10th advocacy visit on behalf of people trafficked in Australia and the wider community. This was the first opportunity I had had to be a part of such a visit and it was a great experience.



Members of ACRATH's tenth anniversary advocacy visit to Parliament in Canberra

After a time of reflection together on Sunday, we spent the rest of that afternoon working together in preparation for the arranged appointments in the coming days. We also met with a worker from the Salvation Army who is based in Canberra and shares ACRATH's concern re forced marriages. During the week, we were able to share with those we met a snapshot of ACRATH's work over the past year.

206 Presentations across Australia

24 Trafficked people assisted

9 Schools in 3 states trialling ACRATH's forced marriage education kit

325 students engaged in forced marriage education kit

229 Network Meetings attended

48 members of House of Representatives & 17 Senators visited

117 items uploaded to the ACRATH website

7,069 hours of volunteer time donated

Volunteer time costed at \$199,065 AUD

During the week, we worked in two's and three's visiting approximately fifty Parliamentarians from all States and all political parties as well as a number of the independent members. We usually had between twenty to thirty minutes with each member so it was very helpful to go to each appointment with our prepared materials at the ready. Each of our visits focussed on two key areas of ACRATH's work:

- (i) addressing the needs of young women and girls facing forced marriages, and
- (ii) addressing the needs of overseas workers facing forced and exploitative labour in Australia.

One special feature of the week's work was the welcome and kind hospitality we were offered by Lorraine Gatehouse csb and Meryl Bollard at *The Gathering Place* which became a home away from home for the group.



A Spring Garden at The Gathering Place, Canberra

While we were in Canberra there were opportunities for some members of our group to meet with Jennifer Byrne from *Anti-Slavery Australia* and to visit the Australian Federal Police - all of whom work for justice for trafficked people. These meetings proved to be great occasions for strengthening valued connections and dialoguing on changing legal and community conditions.

The week of advocacy taught me again of the value of collaborating with others in the complex work for justice.

Claire Griffin csb



A Brigidine Responses to Laudato Si'

Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'* has been highly praised and received almost worldwide. This is unusual as most other encyclicals are received with indifference or worse still, totally ignored. Why is it so well received? Mainly I would say that it is seen as a very forceful invitation, almost a command to all people - ie the whole human family - to protect our "common home", to awaken us to an ecological conversion. As I read the encyclical a little quote from Matthew's gospel kept nagging at me: "We played the pipes for you and you would not listen."

Who played the pipes? For whom were they played? A little voice whispers to me - your Brigidine Sisters, down the years who asked you to look at, study and do something about changing ecological conditions in our world - they played the pipes.

If we look back at our Constitutions, articles in Focus and individual letters over many years there has been a constant tune played! But, this is the big "but", how many of us have heard the pipes? How many of us have responded to the calls? While a good number of sisters have, what about the rest of us? Maybe now we will listen to the "Piper from the Vatican" who, inspired by the Holy Spirit is giving us another chance!

I'd like to say a word of sincere thanks to our own prophets. Well done to our brave women whose thinking was often questioned. Other pens will develop the ideas expressed in *Laudato Si'*, so I want to justify my statement about our Brigidine prophets. I commence with our General Chapter way back in 1971. In reflecting on "Poverty" it stated: "*Living as dependent people, we use property with a religious respect for it, seeing it as part of the universe given us by God... At the same time keeping the poor in mind and share what we have with them with truly generous hearts.*" (On page 50 of *Laudato Si'* a similar theme is expressed).

Our Brigidine Chapters in both 1974 and 1977 continued the same theme with a growing emphasis on the call to mission. If further confirmation is needed, I invite you to re-read

extracts from our Chapters and Forums of more recent years, especially from the Opening of the 1989 Chapter or the challenges about Global Issues from 2001 and 2007. All of this coincides with the first chapter of *Laudato Si'* where Pope Francis states clearly our need to make big changes to our lifestyles, to our personal patterns of production and consumption. Following on from this, in the final chapter of the encyclical he writes, "*God who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way.*" (para 245)

Congratulations to Pope Francis for his wonderful encyclical and to our Brigidine Sisters for reflecting the Pope's message. Now, can we simply bask in the glory of what has been done? I'm afraid not! Hot on the heels of the encyclical come letters from our Congregational Leadership Team inviting us to reflect on the context for the 2016 Forum. Our Reflection Sheets - *Making the Connections 1, 2 and 3* provide us with ample material to go forward with on the road that has brought us to where we are. Other pieces eg "*Together At the Leading Edge*" by Tom Atlee and the reflection "*On Generosity*" by Walter Brueggemann in a recent publication of *Focus*, also give us plenty of food for thought and motivation for action.

To finish with the sentiments of Pope Francis - I propose that we offer two prayers. The first we can share with all who believe in a God who is the all powerful Creator. In the second, we Christians ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus." (para 246). What better preparation could we have for the 2016 Brigidine Congregational Forum?

Michelle Vaughan csb

(Michelle, who is now retired from a wonderful ministry of education, lives in Tullow. She is an avid reader with a keen interest in all things Brigidine, politics and her local community.)





A Brigidine Response - Praying With Laudato Si'

As I read through the comprehensive, challenging and radical encyclical *Laudato Si'* - 'Praise to you my Lord', on the care of our common home, it was not surprising to see that Francis is offering us the pattern of prayer of his Jesuit founder, St Ignatius, (which is the pattern of prayer of the Gospel of Jesus), to help us recognize, discern and take practical steps to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (49). The Pope insists repeatedly in his letter that the damage we are doing to our environment affects poor people more severely than others. Taking then, some significant quotes from the encyclical, I propose to follow the prayer pattern indicated above.

1. In the introductory paragraph of his letter, Francis reminds us of the violence present in our hearts wounded by sin, which has led us to cause such harm to our Sister Mother Earth by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed us (1&2). Francis is asking us to reflect on the challenge before us, on the action/s we have already committed ourselves to take, and how the Holy Spirit is enlightening us to our apathy, indifference, blindness or lack of generosity in the face of the painful effort to meet the cost of our on-going conversion to save our planet.

I pray for the grace of feeling shame and confusion before God, as I consider the damage men and women have inflicted on God's wonderful creation.

2. Continuing to encourage us to be involved as best we can, in the huge areas of climate change, pollution, water, biodiversity, and solidarity with the poor, Francis asks us to gaze on the person of Jesus, our inspiration and example (96). The Pope points out how Jesus invited his disciples to recognize the paternal relationships God has with all creatures. With moving tenderness he would remind them that each one is important in God's eyes "*Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?*", and not one of them is forgotten by God (Luke 12:6). Francis shows us that Jesus was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. Jesus lived in harmony with creation. He worked with his hands, in daily contact with matter created by God. He lived most of his life as a carpenter. In this simple life he sanctified human labour and endowed it with special significance for our development. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, we collaborate with the Son of God in the redemption of humanity (98).....

I ask the grace to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely and to follow him more closely in his vision for the care of our common home.



3. Francis further tells us that ecological spirituality entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift and that we are called quietly to imitate such generosity in self sacrifice and good works (220). The Pope reminds us that love impels us to action, not guilt which causes us to bury our heads in sand and do nothing. This ecological conversion has some very practical aspects. We know how unsustainable is the behaviour of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live a life worthy of their dignity. Francis is quite clear in saying that technology based on highly polluting fossil fuels - especially coal, oil and to a lesser degree gas, need to be progressively replaced without delay (165).



He recommends a series of practical actions which each of us can take: avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption; separating our refuse; cooking only what can be reasonably consumed; showing care for other living beings; using public transport or car pooling; planting trees; turning off unnecessary lights etc. (As Brigidines we take heart as we recall the many years of study, reflection and positive action we have taken and to which we continue to be called by our Care for the Earth Group and our leadership teams.) Francis insists that living our vocation as protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue.

The grace I seek is that God would give me a way of entering into sorrow and regret, as I stay with Jesus in his compassion for our abused Earth, and that he would empower me to respond in whatever way I can to the inspiration he gives me.

4. Toward the end of his encyclical Francis points out that Christian Spirituality proposes an attentive understanding of the quality of life (222) He encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free from the obsession of consumption. A constant flood of new consumer goods, he suggests, can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. He is asking for a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate small things, to be grateful for the opportunities that life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. Francis advocates a way of living life to the full. Happiness, the Pope says, means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer.

Francis goes on to say that he is speaking here of an attitude of heart, one which approaches life into serene attentiveness, capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next and accepting each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full (226). He reminds us that Jesus taught this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, 'he looked on him with love' (Mk 10:21). Jesus was completely present to anyone and anything, and in this way he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers.

The Pope reminds us that one expression of this attitude of heart is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. He asks all believers to return to what he calls this beautiful and meaningful custom, that moment of blessing, however brief, which he says reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our sense of gratitude for the gift of creation, acknowledges those who by their labour provide us with these goods and reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need (227).

To further contemplate the riches of all creation, I pray for the grace of a deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for God's gifts in my life and in the lives of all God's people.

Francis brings his encyclical to a close by offering us a prayer in which we Christians ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us in the Gospel of Jesus.

Elizabeth Cleary csb

(Elizabeth, who lives in Dublin, is a trained spiritual director with many years of experience supporting people in their spiritual journey.)



Some Brigidine Responses to Laudato Si'

When I read the latest encyclical, two sections struck me as particularly significant. In paragraph 82 Pope Francis confronts the worldview we absorbed from Genesis via the Green Catechism, that all creation is there “*for man's use and benefit*”. We now know that this led many to view the whole of nature “...*solely as a source of profit and gain*”. Pillage of Earth's resources, particularly since the Industrial Revolution, has of course meant considerable progress, but it has also led to an experience of inequality and injustice for many, especially those already in need. In Australia the issue of coal seam gas drilling is a case in point. This threatens to contaminate the water table, while enriching the mining companies and providing short-term jobs for some. It also threatens to impoverish farming communities and possibly ruining future food production. We would do well to heed the Pope's call to “*harmony and justice, fraternity and peace*”, and to supporting renewable energy sources.

In paragraph 97 I liked the word “*attentive*”. We are reminded that Jesus was in touch with the beauty of his surroundings, attending and alert to the micro and the macro of his world. Gifted writers of our day - Thomas Berry, Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, Macrina Weiderkehr, Joan Chittester and so many others call us often to be alert to God speaking so eloquently to us through all creation. This is encouragement for us to reclaim the praying-poet within us, contemplating that beauty “*sown*” (wonderful word!) by God.

Clare Keady csb

(Clare is a musician, a former teacher and parish worker who now lives in Maroubra, NSW.)

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* is very accessible to the average reader and calls on every person living on this planet to care for creation, our common home, and to take collective action as we face global environmental degradation. At the heart of his encyclical is the question: “*What kind of world do we want to leave for those who come after us?*” There are a number of themes within the encyclical including the following:

- the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet
- a deep conviction that everything is interconnected and that each creature has value
- a critique of new paradigms and forms of power deriving from technology
- a call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress
- a challenge to our throw away culture
- a call for honest and forthright debate and a serious taking of responsibility for local and international policies. (Refer to Catholic Earthcare Australia)

Pope Francis's encyclical calls for a conversion of heart and for action which respect our interdependence with one another and with the non-human world. I suggest that it would be good for us not just to read the encyclical personally but even better to form a group to explore it.

ACTION 1: Invite a few friends to join you in forming a discussion group. (Francis uses the expertise of the scientific community and quotes many who have addressed this topic before to spell out what is happening to our common home.)

ACTION 2: Fast for the climate and celebrate meatless Friday to reduce your common footprint. (Faith convictions can motivate people to care for nature and for our vulnerable sisters and brothers. Earth is a shared inheritance meant to benefit all.)

ACTION 3: Consider the challenge - how can I live more simply? Use a Spring clean to cull excess. (Francis calls for dialogue so that politics serve human fulfilment and not just economic interest. There is a need to reverse global warming and to eliminate poverty.)

ACTION 4: Move to renewable resources of energy where practicable.



Julia Williams csb

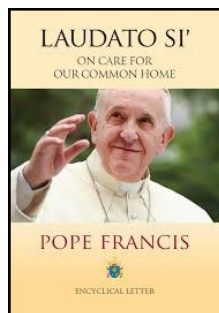
(Julia taught for many years in Australia, PNG and China. She now lives in Bonbeach and is actively engaged in pastoral care and other activities with Brigidines and others.)



A Brigidine Response to Laudato Si'

Reflection on *Laudato Si'* has been inspiring, hopeful and challenging. It offers so much to reflect on, think about and to inspire one to do one's part in order to be at one with the world in which we live and which nourishes us each day.

In paragraph 85 we are reminded that God has written *"a precious book whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe"*. We are asked to recall how the bishops of Japan also made the following observation - *"To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope"*. This invitation gave me much food for thought. However, the area I would like to reflect on in this article is the chapter headed - *"Ecological Education and Spirituality"*.



As we are all aware we live in a world that tends to promote extreme consumerism and it is so easy to fall into the trap of needless buying and spending. One just has to see advertisements on the television to realize this. In paragraph 204 Pope Francis reminds us that when living in a world that is unstable and uncertain, people can become selfish, self-centered and self-enclosed and their greed can increase. *"The emptier a person's heart is the more she or he needs to buy, own and consume"*.

On the other hand, the Pope acknowledges that human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing what is good and making a new start. (Refer paragraph 205). Since we have been graced with both the gift of life and the gift of the universe we can also be open to respond to that grace at work within each one of us. The Pope invites us to change our lifestyles and to be instruments of change that enable others to do the same. He uses an example with which we are all familiar ie boycotting products which are not ethically produced.



This is one positive way by which we can effect change. When people boycott products and the rate of sales is affected, companies have to find ways to produce differently. This action also leads some companies to make moves to reduce their carbon footprint thus having a less damaging effect on the environment.

In paragraph 211 Pope Francis tells us *"there is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions"*. It is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. For me that is one of the most important challenges in this encyclical. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us. We know many of these things already but the challenge for me is, am I consistently doing this? For example do I strive to avoid using plastic plates and excess paper? Am I careful in reducing water consumption? How committed am I to cooking only what can be consumed, to turning off unnecessary lights, and to using public transportation? The list of challenges could go on. Each of us in our own areas of the world can practise any of the above and encourage others to do so.

What I appreciate about this encyclical is that it offers a reminder of the many practical things we can do to play our part in caring for this planet which has been gifted to us as our home.

Agnes Oman csb

(Agnes worked for a number of years in Mexico and with the Hispanic community in US. She now lives and ministers in San Antonio, Texas.)



“My Learning Difficulty Does Not Define Me.”

At the age of eight I was diagnosed with mild dyslexia which helped me understand why I had difficulties at school. I can still remember though how my parents instilled in me that I could be whatever I wanted to be in life if I worked really hard. In primary school I began extra classes for reading and spelling and thankfully was never made to feel different from other children. For a time I also attended the Dyslexia Centre in Clonmel. This holds memories of an enjoyable time as each weekend I travelled with my mam, listening to the radio and being treated to an orange juice along the way. When a Dyslexia Centre opened in Tullow, it brought an end to the Saturday trips as I began attending Wednesday evening classes after school. This Centre in Tullow was a great support to my family and to me. Speakers would meet with our parents, Christmas concerts were organized each year and there was a strong sense of community among all involved in the Centre.

Going to secondary school I enjoyed meeting new teachers and learning new subjects and I embraced my time there. I found my strength in mathematics (a subject both my mother and father embraced too). For my Leaving Certificate I chose accounting, physics and maths - all at honours level. I received spelling and grammar exemptions for English, Irish and French. I was thrilled to obtain 475 points in my Leaving Certificate and was accepted into NUI Galway to do a Bachelor course in Civil Engineering. It wasn't until I was at university that my confidence grew sufficiently for me to talk about suffering dyslexia. I was proud that I had achieved so much and I began to see dyslexia as a gift in my engineering studies. I graduated from Galway University in 2012 with a 2.1 degree and found myself in something of a 'no man's land'. At that time in Ireland engineering jobs were few and hard to come by. So after a lot of searching and many conversations I applied to do a Masters Degree at Edinburg Napier University, Scotland and commenced studies there in Renewable Energy in January 2013. I graduated first in my class, receiving the University Medal.

During my studies at Edinburg I was lucky enough to have a lecturer who saw potential in me and who asked me to consider doing a PhD. At first I refused but eventually applied to take up the suggestions and was awarded a university scholarship fully funding the 3 year PhD studies. I am now in the first year of my research into the thermal performance of the electric vehicle. I love what I do and am very excited to be involved in this research.

Reading and writing is a huge part of my job. A lot of time I read a passage first to see if I can read the words and then read it again to comprehend it. However, this is how I have always learned and that's the way it is for me. I can still do everything, it just means I have to work a little bit harder. I am aware that I am very lucky to have mild dyslexia and have accepted that I cannot 'fix' it as my innocent eight year old self was determined to do. However, I can say that I am proud of it now and proud of how I can use it to my advantage. I was lucky to have such a supportive family who were not embarrassed by my dyslexia but instead thought of me first, addressed the reality and filled me with confidence.

Every child with dyslexia has something to offer and it is with supportive parents and educational systems that they will flourish. Every child is different. My younger sister also has dyslexia and is currently studying psychology - something that would terrify me but which she loves! While early days of learning can be frustrating, once one's niche is found, one will surely strive.

To finish I would like to thank everyone who has helped me - my teachers in primary and secondary school, my remedial teachers and all the supporters at the Dyslexia Centre in Tullow, especially Sr. Thomasina Murphy. Thank you all for all the work you did for me and all the work you are still doing. Words cannot sufficiently thank my parents for all their support and sacrifices over the years. They thought of me not as a dyslexic child but as a child with dyslexia. My learning difficulty does not define me, it is just part of me.

Aisling Doyle



Attending to the Mystic, Rebel and Prophet in Each of Us

There's a little of the mystic, the rebel and the prophet in all of us because of the seed of God within us which grows these characteristics. We underestimate the power and presence of the divine within us, calling us to be resurrection people, called out of the tomb to be in the light. Edwina Gately, born in Lancaster, UK., graduated as a teacher in 1961 and in 1964 went to Africa as a lay missionary teacher. At a send-off party for Edwina her mother remarked: "Our Edwina is different, never settled down, now off to Africa, a little bit odd." Reflecting on her mother's remark, Edwina says we have to be odd and different to follow the call to look after the "little ones", to follow the growing seed within us. The contemplative urge never left her and from it sprang her sense of mission to love and serve others and to lead them to recognise that love within themselves. Edwina went to Africa to evangelise the poor, bringing them the best of white culture, church and a male God. What a shock she got on discovering that God was already there in the hospitality of the people. Our task, she realised, is to see the God that is already there. It was she who was converted to know that God is black and white, male and female. We are called to stretch our hearts to a bigger image of the divine. Her first years in Africa were challenging, meeting with a great big image of God by comparison with that of the cultural standards of the western world. Her new task, she reflected, was to bring this God back to the bishops of the UK, a God that is larger than who "prays, pays and obeys".

The breath of God never left her. She had to do something about justice, God and mission as a lay missionary, in line with the Second Vatican Council. Her conviction that the laity are also blessed deepened as she realized that they too have been given all the tools required to produce the harvest of God's seed. Edwina returned to London and set up the Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM). After 10 years she had 500 volunteers, serving in 26 countries on 5 continents. But God's call to look after the "little ones" was consistent. Edwina went to the Sahara desert for 3 months. The intensity of the deep silence and the surrounding nothingness was very powerful. It brought her to a listening space, inviting her to move on from VMM London. She went to a theology college in Chicago but God said: "Put away your certainties and do just nothing." - a very counter-cultural idea. She bought a caravan, parked it in a forest and lived there, fasting, praying and hoping God would hurry up with whatever was next. After 9 months she felt called to work with women in prostitution. "When we're ridiculous enough to trust a wild God, God takes advantage of us," she reflected. When we have nothing, God sows possibilities. Edwina rented a room for women in prostitution. They welcomed her into their world of pimping, criminality and being judged by others. Little by little their masks fell away and she heard their stories. She helped them see their God-given reality as daughters of God.

In light of Edwina's story, how will we continue the exploration of our call to a renewed and dynamic spirituality, inspiring us to believe in our own potential to bring about new life in our broken world? When we read in scripture that God moves mountains, our mountains of fear, we have space for new visions and dreams for that's where God waits to bring about new life. We are called to give birth to the divine in our own small way. We can't do it all but we can be a place of love. The Church must be a holding room, a place of intense light that will transform the darkness. We have to change the system that produces diminishment. We must not adapt to it but instead, find creative ways to change it.

Our focus as religious needs to be on maintaining sight of the call to be the rebels, mystics and prophets. We are called to continue to find courageous ways to be elders in ministry. It's for each one of us to make time to leave behind the activity and to withdraw to spend time in contemplation. Our world needs new words, and new images, a more creative people, who will go out and make this world a better place, people who know that there are ways other than war, and oppression. In our ministries, we need imagination to come up with something different. What is this new thing that God is doing? What is this new thing that you want God to do for you to help bring about new life in our broken world?

(Courtesy of Angela Phelan csb from sessions by Edwina Gately)



Good News from Around the Congregation



How long is it since you checked out our website - www.brigidine.org.au?

We are in the process of updating it. We encourage you to have a look and see the changes happening.

In time, the new website will have a 'Members Only Section' for Brigidine Sisters. When it is up and fully operational we will share details re how to gain access to this 'Members Only Section'. It will offer opportunities for Communities to share reflections and other materials that are part of each Community's preparation for the Congregational Forum in May 15 - 31 2016.

OTHER RELATED WEBSITES:

www.solasbhride.ie

www.kildareministries.org.au

www.kildaracentre.org

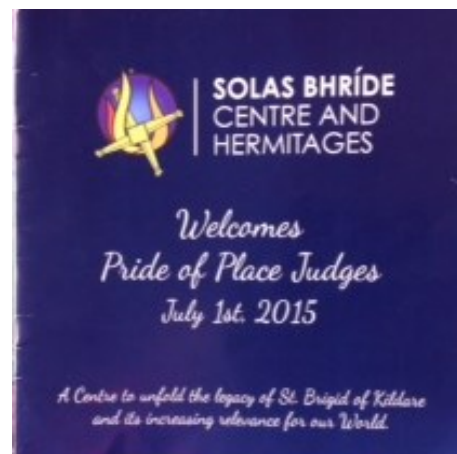
www.thegatheringplace.org.au

www.brigidine.org.nz

www.basp.org.au



June and July were very busy times for all involved in Solas Bhríde, Kildare. Apart from continuing to plan and facilitate regular services at the Centre, they welcomed a number of pilgrimage groups and were nominated as contestants in the "Pride of Place Competition". This event has participants from all around Ireland. To date, we are still awaiting the result of the competition but are all very proud of the people and work of Solas Bhríde.



Members of the Congregational Leadership Team also visited Solas Bhríde during their recent time of working in Ireland.





‘The Curragh’ - Brigidine College, Indooroopilly

Recently, the community at Brigidine College Indooroopilly decided to transform the southern side of the campus by removing three houses and developing playing space for the girls. This coincided with the introduction of Year 7 into our high school. After a few setbacks, the College is pleased to announce that the new ‘green space’ is now fully operational for students and staff. This precious space of green learning and playing area, will be an integral component for the evolving College over the next few years. An available area to breathe, relax and enjoy is a wonderful addition to the College facilities and one long overdue.



When attempting to provide a suitable name for this new space, the College drew on the inspiration of one of its teachers, tapping our Celtic roots and linked the new space to our Brigidine, Irish heritage from Kildare. The Curragh in Co Kildare, Ireland, is noted for its excellent soils. Some 22 square km in area, it was an ancient meeting place and the Curragh has been just such a common since at least the 12th century. The rich pastureland is renowned for the breeding of racehorses; it is said that races were held there as early as the 1st century AD. It is the site of several noted training stables, and horse studs are located there. The Irish Derby is run there annually.



Used as a meeting site during Pre-Christian societies, the Curragh is shrouded in a mist of mythology. The hill north of the Curragh is called the Hill of Allen (Almhain) and is the meeting place of the mythical Fianna. Legend has it that in about 480 AD, when St Brigid became intent on founding a monastery in Kildare town, she asked the High King of Leinster for the land on which to build it. One of the more commonly told stories is of Brigid telling the King that the place where she stood was the perfect place for a monastery. It was beside a forest where they could collect firewood and berries. There was also a lake nearby that would provide water and the land was fertile. The King laughed at her and refused to give her any land. Brigid prayed to God and asked him to soften the king's heart. Then she smiled at the king and said “Will you give me as much land as my cloak will cover?” The king thought that she was joking and to get rid of her importunity he agreed. She directed four of her sisters to take up the garment, but instead of laying it flat on the turf, each sister, with face turned to a different point of the compass, began to run swiftly, the cloth expanding in all directions. The cloak grew immediately and began to cover many acres of land. “Oh, Brigid!” said the frightened king, “What are you about?” Brigid answered, “I am, or rather my cloak is about covering your whole province to punish you for your stinginess to the poor.” The King responded: “Call your maidens back. I will give you a decent plot of ground.” The saint was persuaded, and if the King held his purse-strings tight on any future occasion she had only to allude to her cloak to bring him to reason. Soon afterwards, the King became a Christian and also started to help the poor and commissioned the construction of the monastery.



The above three images are of ‘The Curragh’ at Brigidine College, Indooroopilly

Legend has it, the monastery became known for its monks and nuns making jam from the local blueberries which was sought for all over Ireland. There is a tradition among many followers of St. Brigid to eat jam on Brigid’s feast day, 1st February in honour of this miracle.



The Curragh, Co Kildare, Ireland

Brendan Cahill, Brigidine College, Indooroopilly



Celebrations and Gatherings



Diamond and Golden Jubilarians celebrate in Sydney
- L to R: Elizabeth Hayes, Faye Kenny, Kath Dwyer, Margaret Daniels, Maria Bernadone Kosseris, Jane Keogh, Eleanor Carter, Maureen Keady



In July, Brigidine Sisters - Francesca Power, Cathy O'Connor, Teresa Carter, Maureen O'Leary, Mary Dalton and Breda O'Neill celebrated their Jubilees in Tullow. Agnes Oman celebrated her Jubilee in Texas during September.



Brigid Arthur csb at the opening of the new Brigid Arthur Design Centre, Marian College, West Sunshine, Victoria



Mary Griffiths, Brigid Arthur, Cletus Dullard and Angela Watt celebrate their 60th Jubilees



Mary T Malone spent a day working with the Sisters from the Ireland/UK/US Community during their Summer Assembly Days. Her excellent and challenging presentations were on "Women In Scripture".

Francis Keon, Catriona Devlin and Anne Hill celebrating their 50th Jubilees



Celie Nihill celebrating her 25th Jubilee

**Congratulations
and thank you
to all our 2015
Jubilarians**





The Eternal World

Death is actually a rebirth. At our first birth, we came out of the darkness of the unknown. Then came our life here, before we return at death into the unknown. Samuel Beckett captured this wonderfully in a very short little play, *Breath*. It begins with a birth cry. Breathing follows and then the death sigh. The soul is freed into a world where there is no more darkness and indeed no more space and time as we knew it in this world. So where does the soul go? Meister Eckhart had a simple answer to that. It goes nowhere. The eternal world is not some faraway galaxy that we haven't discovered yet. The eternal world is here. The dead are here with us, invisible to us, but we can sense their presence. They are looking out for us.



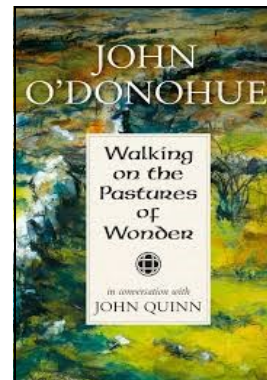
For us time is linear, but for the dead it is more a circle of eternity. John Moriarty, the wonderful Kerry philosopher, says that time is eternity living dangerously. That is his magic sentence and it is so true. The Celtic people did not divide time from eternity. They were *fite fuaite*, woven into each other. Eternity is not an extension of time, but it is pure presence, pure belonging. When you are in the eternal, you are outside of nothing. You are within everything, enjoying the fullest participation. There is no more separation. It is what the contemplative medieval scholars called the Beatific Vision, where the eye with which you see God is God's eye seeing you. You are embraced in the purest circle of love. You are everywhere and you are nowhere, but you are in complete presence.

Death is going to come, no-one has been able to stop it yet!

The Connemara people say, *Ni fiedir dul I bhfolach ar an mbas* - you cannot hide from death. We fear it because we do not know how, when or where it will come, but come it will. Yet we still have such a great freedom about the way we approach it. We should not think negatively or destructively about it, but rather see the possibilities that are in it.

Of course there is lonesomeness in it. Of course there is fright in it, going into the unknown, but we have been given wonderful shelters about the belonging that is in it. It is not a dark end but the beginning of a path of new brightness. If we can learn not to fear death, we have literally nothing to fear.

John O'Donohue - *Walking On The Pastures of Wonder*, p 168 - 170.



This wonderful book was published by Veritas Publications this year and is highly recommended



John O'Donohue died suddenly on 4 January 2008, at the age of fifty-two.

Pilgrims, like the young man pictured here, often visit where he is buried in the Creggagh graveyard, in John's beloved west of Ireland.



Gerardus Thistlethwaite csb

17 July 1929 - 26 July 2015

Those who knew and loved Gerardus were struck by her two big gifts, strength and gentleness, which she shared with all those around her. Her strong faith and determination were evident when, at the age of fifteen, she applied to join the Brigidine Sisters whom she knew through her aunt, Sister Matthew. Her request was granted and, in 1944, Ina Margaret Thistlethwaite left her loving family in Port Fairy to embark on religious life as Sister Gerardus. She was professed in August 1947 and for the next fifty years or so cared for many communities in both city and country. In her younger days, her ministry consisted mainly of home-making and home-management, as well as care of the sick and elderly in our Brigidine houses. Some of our country houses accommodated boarders and these also came under her motherly care. Apart from her competence at homemaking in its many forms, Gerardus had the great gift of a listening ear, so that people could talk to her freely and with trust. A remarkable aspect of her ministry was her ability to remain calm even in the most trying circumstances. When demands were greatest, Gerardus could quietly and firmly decide what was appropriate and feasible, so that peace prevailed.

Gerardus' role as home-maker and community builder was never lost, but it broadened in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Like many Religious, she felt the need to extend her apostolate beyond home duties. The opportunity to do this arose when in Bonbeach she provided hospitality and peaceful surroundings for sisters who chose to make a private retreat. Again, as Superior in Ararat, her post-Vatican II enthusiasm flourished in parish activities, as she cared for the spiritual and emotional needs of the people she visited. Although Gerardus considered herself ill-equipped for this apostolate, she acknowledged that she found it very rewarding.

There was no doubting the motivation behind Gerardus' kindness and serenity. From the outset, her faith in God and commitment to prayer were clearly evident. In the 1970's, she participated in local groups of the Catholic Charismatic Movement, which was then at its height. As her spirituality developed, she confided in friends that she experienced less need for such outward demonstrations of faith and was drawn more towards contemplative prayer, and the contemplative way of life.

By her own admission, the high point of Gerardus' life was the setting up and oversight of the House of Prayer in South Wangaratta from 1991 to 1995. She writes that the House of Prayer was "where I found what I had been seeking all my life." With the support of the Victorian Province, Gerardus and her "soul friend", Mary Lacey, here created a haven where it was possible to make room for an openness to relationships – with God and with each other. In 1996 Gerardus moved to Beechworth to meet the needs of our community there. Once again she immersed herself in community and parish life with all the experience, wisdom and generosity that had accumulated over so many years.

Feeling the need to be closer to her family, Gerardus asked to be transferred to Ararat in 2002. Here she renewed her close relations with friends of the past and came to know many newcomers, including those in her prison ministry. When her own health began to decline she became reliant on the care and support of Maree Holt and the Ararat community.

In 2009, Gerardus moved to Corpus Christi Aged Care Facility, where visits from our sisters and Health Care Team kept her in touch. As her health deteriorated, and she was moved to high care, Gerardus' serene and patient living continued as she waited for God's embrace. May Gerardus enjoy everlasting peace with God, as she lays down the burden of sickness and increasing weariness, and finds rest with God.

Margaret and Mary Jenkins csb



Elizabeth Kelly csb

30 November, 1929 - 6 August, 2015

Elizabeth was born at The Glen, Windgap, Co Kilkenny, the eldest child in a family of ten children. After a sea journey of five weeks, she arrived in Australia in November 1953 to enter the Brigidine novitiate at Malvern. From the beginning of her life in Victoria, she was involved in everything, even though it must have been extremely lonely for her at times as there were no other Irish novices at that period.

Over the course of her Brigidine life, Elizabeth's ministry as a homemaker was carried out in nine different communities, in both city and country communities. Her first appointment in 1955 was to the Beechworth community and her homemaking continued through to her appointment as a foundation member of the St Brigid's community, Malvern, in 1997. Elizabeth's early ministry was in boarding schools where she came to be appreciated for both her understanding and kindness, often helping students at difficult times in their lives. Many a troubled child found Elizabeth's kitchen a haven. Sisters too appreciated Elizabeth's care, especially shown on occasions by hot coffee and date scones for morning tea on freezing, foggy days. Throughout her ministry, Elizabeth was known for her practical common sense, her ability to stay calm and to take action whenever a crisis arose. She is remembered as being quite capable of dealing with rats, possums, foxes etc and if an animal escaped the hands of this intrepid Irish hunter, it certainly didn't return for a second go! In spite of these episode, Elizabeth was really an great animal lover and particularly loved Pippa, the cat, at St Brigid's. She loved nature and all its beauty. She loved to contemplatively watch the garden birds and the changes of each season. Elizabeth was an avid reader and she kept herself and her community well informed about current issues. Music and poetry delighted her as did pitting her wits against the famous 'Eggheads' quiz team on TV.

Elizabeth's family in Ireland and England loved her regular visits 'home' and the times when some of their members were able to visit her in Australia where they also met the Brigidine sisters wherever Elizabeth was living at that time. At other times, with no skype, video links or emails, the photos sent back and forth between Elizabeth and her family helped keep them in touch with one another.

Those who lived in community with Elizabeth remember her as a woman of integrity and deep spirituality and a woman of common sense, wit and dry humour. Living with, praying with and sharing stories with Elizabeth has been an experience that has enriched all in very precious ways.

Elizabeth spent the last year of her life at Corpus Christi Aged Care Facility in Clayton. The transition into care was not always easy for Elizabeth and called for further adaptations. However, we have been inspired with Elizabeth's openness to form new friendships during this time and her ability to get to know the names of at least half of the residents within her first few months of living at Corpus Christi. She came to really enjoy participating in many of the activities and was know for her willingness to 'have a go'. In the midst of all the changes, she found solace in being able to wander and enjoy the beauty of the Corpus Christi gardens.

Elizabeth, we will miss you and we will always remember you. As someone remarked in recent days, "In whatever way you touched people's lives, it was for the better." May you now rest in peace!

Maria Guinan csb



Dorothea Pini csb

17 May 1926 - 22 August 2015

Dorothea (Margaret) was the third child of John and Lily Pini. She went to school in Beechworth where she met the Brigidines. On her 21st birthday in 1947 Dorothea entered the Brigidine novitiate. Her life as a Brigidine had two distinct phases. For the first twenty years she was involved in education both as a teacher and as a Principal. Her time in schools was mainly in Rochester and Holden Hill with short stretches in other areas. Her past pupils and colleagues recall her as a compassionate and dedicated teacher. Several past pupils have said she was a good Geography teacher and others spoke of her giftedness as a Maths teacher. Dorothea took a special interest in each of the students and she was loved and respected by them.

In 1967 Dorothea undertook theological studies at the Mater Dei Institute in Sydney. This course was the groundwork for the second phase of her Brigidine ministry. Dorothea was appointed as Director of Assumption Institute where a renewal course for women religious was held. She undertook this role from 1972 to 1979. Dorothea organised a theologically sound program, gathering high quality lecturers and spiritual directors for the participants. She took a special interest in each person enrolled in the course and thus began her ministry of Spiritual Direction and Directed Retreats which continued for the past thirty or forty years right up to this year. Over the years Dorothea led retreats from Hobart to Cairns and at Perthville, Kincumber, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne in between and across the waters in New Zealand and has been available in her role as a spiritual companion through visits and through phone contact.

That tells us what Dorothea did but what we all remember is the person - Dorothea as a wise, strong and compassionate woman. She had an ability to engage in conversation with many different people and with each one at the appropriate level. She was a very good listener, had a depth of understanding of issues, a deep sense of justice, a fount of common sense and at all times her deep faith underpinned her relationships and interactions. As well as all of us missing Dorothea, Telstra will also notice the loss because, especially in the last twenty years or so, much of Dorothea's direction and engagement with others was via the phone and much of it involved calls from interstate or from New Zealand. There is a seminal moment in Victorian Brigidine history which is referred to as the 'Harrierville experience'. Dorothea was among those who recognised early that changes were taking place in religious life and who with passion and determination helped us as a group to move forward. She was not a person who lectured others or tried to impose her views – she listened, asked questions, led, counselled, inspired and encouraged. She was a deep thinker herself and made others think seriously about life. It was not only to those outside the community that Dorothea was a support and an inspiration – Dorothea was a great community member – easy to live with, even tempered with a sense of fun and of humour. She will be very much missed by the Malvern community where she has lived for the past three years. Dorothea has always been very committed to her local community and also involved in the wider Victorian Brigidine community.

Dorothea, what have you given to us that we shall miss most? We shall miss you, Dorothea, as a wise and caring woman, as a person who listened, who believed in each person and the long term courage you showed as you coped with on-going ill health for many years. Dorothea has known pain and mystery in her own life. She showed remarkable courage in keeping going despite many trips to the hospital due to having difficulty with breathing. While she did never complain, Dorothea did admit privately that, at times, it was scary to feel her breathing becoming difficult and to wonder whether the next breath would come. In the end she showed remarkable courage in facing her final health issues. After talking with the doctors and our nurses and accepting the reality that they were no longer able to control the infections, she agreed that treatment would stop. She faced her death with the same calm courage and faith that she had shown in her living despite there being some frustration over the last few days that it was taking longer to die than she had expected. Dorothea was truly a Brigidine woman – a woman of strength and a woman of gentleness. May she be at peace with the God whom she loved and whom she knew loved her.

Angela Ryan csb