

The Grail Newsletter

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AS TORRENTS IN SUMMER

As torrents in summer, half dried in their channels,
Suddenly rise, tho' the sky is still cloudless,
For rain has been falling far off at their fountains;

So hearts that are fainting grow full to o'erflowing
And they that behold it marvel, yet know not
That God in their fountains far off has been raining.

Henry Longfellow



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[Since this Newsletter is coming to you between Easter and Pentecost, we began with a poem of Longfellow's on God's gifts of new life and conclude with some energising thoughts about the Spirit in today's world.]	

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Melbourne

There are some decisions to be made by the Melbourne members this year which will bring some changes, not yet clear.

Pat Sheeran, whose home at 2/38 Northcote Avenue has also been the Grail Secretariat and meeting place for Melbourne members, moved from Balwyn to a residential aged care centre in Clayton in mid-January, where she is happily settled in a very attractive room. It has almost a wall of windows, which provide lovely natural light and a pleasant view onto a large courtyard with trees, shrubs and flowers. Pat is enjoying good care and company. You can reach her at Room 59, Corpus Christi Aged Care Facility, 80 Clayton Road, Clayton, Vic.3168. Tel. 03 9544-5599. Andrea Venier is now the Contact Person for the Melbourne Grail (see addresses on p.2) and everyone is grateful to her for taking on this role. Genny Grabau had already generously taken over Pat's work with regional and national finances, managing them superbly. Others, especially Irena Dunne with her husband Kevin, June and Laurie Ryan and Joan Ryan have opened their homes to host Grail meetings and events and liturgical celebrations.

Planning for the future involves exploring new possibilities for Grail growth in Melbourne, questions of selling and buying property, re-organising administration and promoting outreach.

The death in December last of Carolyn Royal, one of our most creative and active members, left us with a deep sense of loss. In the Newsletter of December 2012, we told you that, with strong determination and the help of an inspiring physiotherapist, Carolyn had made remarkable progress after sustaining a serious head injury in a fall. She was talking fluently, her memory was functioning well, she had increasing movement in her left limbs and had walked unaided for six minutes. She, Peter and the family were looking forward to her being home for Christmas. 21st

December found us gathered in the church of St Thomas More, Mount Eliza, for a Eucharist of farewell and celebration of her life of loving and creative achievement. Three priests who had worked in the parish over the years and knew the Royals well returned to honour her, including former Auxiliary Bishop Hilton Deacon. The church was overflowing with people; the liturgy full of beauty. Peter, youngest daughter Monica and Carolyn's brother Michael gave voice to memories that brought tears and laughter. They did her proud.

We're happy that Daphne Tighe and Barbara Stewart, who became life-long friends when they met in 'Tay Creggan' to participate in its residential programs of adult education and formation for young women, have decided to travel together in May to Cincinnati, USA, to a unique international gathering of Grail women aged 70-100! (See later international news.)

We offer our sympathy to the Billings family who recently farewelled their mother, Lyn. We remember her as a beautiful woman, warm, gentle and strong. She and her husband John were long-time friends of The Grail, especially in the years of 'Tay Creggan'.

It will not be long before Pentecost brings this joyous season of Easter to an end. May the Spirit renew us and our Earth.

Melbourne Grail women

Sydney

Between the last Newsletter and this, two long-time friends departed this life. Yvonne Truen, one of the earliest Grail members in Sydney, died in McQuoin Park Nursing Home and Rev. Tom O'Donovan sj in the Jesuit Centre in Pymble. Yvonne was a keen member of the Grail Film Group in her youth. Decades later, I remember seeking her help with cataloguing the film archive in the Sydney Centre. Yvonne

brought her 8mm projector and we had a very enjoyable time viewing the films on the wall of the small sitting room. One was a fine film of the funeral day in Sydney of Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, which we sent to the Australian Film Archive in Canberra. Later again, I talked with Yvonne each week in McQuoin Park for several months when visiting Shirley Collins there. Her interest in The Grail remained strong to the end. Tom O'Donovan, or 'Tod', was a stalwart friend in Melbourne and Sydney and we will always be grateful for his support and availability

Our new year at the Centre began on 2nd February with a program of *Introduction to the Grail* for seven women, which, as usual, was stimulating and enjoyable. Some had participated already in other Grail activities. On Pentecost Sunday, four will formally affirm their wish to become a committed member and we are all looking forward to this happy celebration.

With Easter early this year, the Grail Singers had to hurry themselves along at Tuesday rehearsals to prepare the evening of music, readings and prayer for Holy Week in St Mary MacKillop Chapel. Margaret Quinn chose a lovely variety of music from plain chant, to a Ghanaian folk tune, to 20th Century compositions, which moved singers and listeners alike.

'Food for the Soul', the Wednesday evening of 'lectio divina' with various chosen texts, began again on Ash Wednesday. Through Lent, we contemplated the four Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial, inspired by Rowan Williams' fine book, *Christ on Trial*. Since then, we've completed our readings of 'kingdom of God' parables and are now moving into Luke's Acts. We welcomed two new participants and continue to invite anyone interested just to turn up on any Wednesday in school term time, 7.30 – 9 pm. Convenor Tricia Gemmell leads a similar day-time group on Tuesday mornings once every two months.

The Book Club continues on the last Friday night of each month with the liveliest of conversations and the most delicious of suppers. No, be assured that we have not allowed the supper to become the primary reason for our meet-

ing. Next month's book will be Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*. By that time, Sonia and George Mrva and their son Dushan will be back from visiting Sonia's mother and family in Peru.

Over many months, Tricia and Geoff Gemmell have been at the forefront of achieving the installation of a peal of bells in their parish church, St Leonard's, Naremburn. While many churches have a single bell that is tolled at the Angelus and funerals and other special occasions, St Leonard's is now only the third Catholic church in Sydney with a peal of bells - six of them. The other two churches are St Mary's Cathedral and St Benedict's, Broadway; their bells were installed in 1844 and 1851 respectively. The church of the Sacred Heart, Darlinghurst, seems to have acquired a peal of bells in 1855, but, by 1914, they were heard no more. 2013 is the centenary of St Leonard's church. When the bells were dedicated and rung for the first time on Sunday, 7th April, the people who crowded the church were deeply moved, to tears and to joyful applause. Naremburn's six bells, all of different weights (from 248 to 510 kgs) were cast in 1866 and once hung in the church of Our Lady and St David in Bangor, Wales. An anonymous member of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Bellringers donated them, while all the other costs were met from fundraising appeals and efforts. Geoff, who chaired the Centenary Committee and bore the burden of the project (local residents who vehemently opposed the bells, the local council's restrictive conditions, the complexity and schedule of the installation), was exhausted by the day of dedication, but gratified. As was Tricia, who has been learning to become a bellringer herself and who planned, and in part wrote, the dedication ritual. For all the rest of us present, including Bishop Peter Ingham of Wollongong, once a schoolboy of Naremburn, and Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, it was a delightful event.

This month, Ken McNamara sj returned to India. Ken came back to Australia to have a pacemaker inserted and to spend time with his sister, Pat, whose health is declining. He arrived in December in time for the Memorial Eucharist for Margot Harrison and spoke then of his long

relationship with The Grail since his university days, when he played the role of Parsifal in a Grail production in the Sydney University Great Hall. We are always very happy to see him. We wish him and his colleagues in India well and look forward to his next return trip.

Another happy event connecting the Jesuits, India and The Grail in Sydney was the launch of Patrick Lewis' book about his wife, Barbara (Coleman), who had three brothers join the Jesuits, one of whom, Paul, has served the community of North Sydney in several different roles for many years. Barbara was drawn to India as a young woman by Leonard Cheshire, who entrusted to her the supervision of a number of his projects dedicated to the care and education of needy Indian children. He and his wife, Sue Ryder, established the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation to fund their projects and Barbara played a vital role in the work of the Foundation in India and Australia. The Lavender Bay church hall was full of friends and admirers of Barbara. Patrick and Paul spoke. So also did Anne Boyd, who lived in the Sydney Grail Centre before volunteering as a nurse with Ryder-Cheshire homes in India.

Finally, Anne Marie George contributes an update on the 'Journal for Prisoners' project:

In the last Newsletter, we reported that a small group of us were working on creating a reflection journal for inmates. It is to be modelled on a similar project of Sr Joan Chittister, where someone on the outside purchased a journal for a price that would also provide one for someone on the inside. We've had an active few months working on this through group emails, the occasional meeting and lots of activity on Dropbox, our wonderful internet-based collaboration tool. After months of gathering inspiring quotes and matching photos and design ideas, we have a good repository to start from now. Marian Kelly recently accepted the job of desktop publisher on the project and so now we officially have an artist on board to give a thoughtful and professional look to the book – something that appeals to the eye and the heart. Funding for the project is being sought through appeals to prominent Catholic businesses such as Catholic Church

Insurance and legal firms and some Diocesan Offices. We're seeking quotes from various printing companies in Sydney for an initial print run of around 2000 copies for an A5-sized journal with some blank pages and some lined pages and colour photos. If all goes to plan, we should have journals available for sale well before Christmas 2013. If you have any inspiring, original, high-resolution photos you think might suit, or would like to be part of the project in some way, please email grailsydney@ozemail.com.au. (A sample quote from the journal: 'We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are' – The Talmud.)

Alison Healey

Brisbane

The Brisbane group continues to meet monthly in members' homes and it is a welcome moment to share prayer and stay in touch. Outside of our Grail meetings our lives go in many directions.

Our thoughts are with Elizabeth Lancaster as she will retire from her job of many years as senior chemist and manager with the pharmaceutical company, AlphaPharm, which makes generic products. Elizabeth is currently in Perth travelling with her sister Anne and brother-in-law Trevor. They will attend the birthday celebration of their aunt Shirley and do some sight-seeing in Western Australia. Elizabeth has some community activities planned and is looking forward to the opportunity to follow neglected interests and hobbies.

There has been much talk in our group on the importance of capturing the history of the Grail and, in particular, of St Raphael's College at James Cook University. Many of us in the group met while at St Raphael's and we hold our years there dear in our hearts.

Mary Anne Baillie visited Brisbane from Mackay earlier in the year. She stayed at the Vidler's home and attended the christening of her cousin's grandchild as well as catching up with Grail members here.

Some news about our youngest generation: Ailsa, daughter of Helen Jeffcoat and Brian Paterson completed school last year, and has started a degree in primary teaching at the University of Queensland. Gloria Lazzarini's grand-nephew and Clare Keune's grandson, Nicholas Keune, is competing in the Australian National Swimming championships in Adelaide this weekend. Terara Musrau, Maggie Jenatsch's granddaughter, has represented Brisbane North in a regional netball competition. Claudie Jenatsch, Maggie's and Reto's son, spent some time in hospital during Holy Week. Back home and continuing with his usual activities, he is undergoing further tests. We wish Claudie well and hope for good results.

Recently, Jan O'Donoghue's daughter-in-law, Rebecca, attended her grandmothers's funeral. Her grandmother was Mrs Louise de Weger, who arrived in Australia in 1953 with husband Mick and three children. They were part of the Dutch wave of post-war migration and Louise had been a member of the Grail in the Netherlands. At her death she left 10 children, 34 grandchildren and 34 great grandchildren.

Ann Aboud attended a day on 'Doing Theology as Spiritual Care', presented by Rev. John Chalmers at Canossa on 6th April. She writes:

K. Stendhal, a Lutheran bishop, gave this definition, 'Doing theology is worrying about what God worries about - mending creation'. Using 'amateur' in its basic meaning of 'loving', Letty Russell believes that 'everyone is called to be an amateur theologian in response to the amateur God who does things for love of us'. Johann-Baptist Metz says, 'For me, there is no God to whom I could pray with my back turned towards Auschwitz'. Fr John drew a parallel with turning our backs on refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked women. He described three ways of seeing. Seeing with the first eye is seeing with the senses; seeing with the second eye involves interpretation; seeing with the third eye is to ask the question: What's God up to here?

Reconsidering the Paschal Mystery, he proposed that appropriating Good Friday entails naming what we have lost; Holy Saturday entails sitting

with the pain of loss; Easter Sunday proclaims God's transforming of loss and death into resurrection. In the Gospel, we read of Jesus' post-resurrection meeting with Mary Magdalen. She is elated that Jesus is alive, that things are back to normal.. But Jesus cautions, 'Do not cling to me. I have yet to ascend to my Father'. Things are not back to normal. Mary needs to let go of what has, in fact, passed away to a new reality. Pentecost entails accepting the new Spirit appropriate for a new life; it entails living this new life graciously and faithfully, with the grace of the Spirit we most need at each particular moment in our lives.

May the Easter resurrection inspire new beginnings in your life.

Brisbane Grail members

North Queensland

I, for one, am blaming my lethargic start to the year on the weather. Unlike recent summers in this part of the country, 2013 has started quite dry, yet with extreme heat and humidity day and night.

In spite of this, Margaret Tranter and Andrew have moved themselves and all their belongings from Ingham some 200 kms north to the Atherton Tablelands. At the same time, Deborah Pennington and Cheryl Vacchini returned from their year-long travels around Australia and unpacked themselves back into their Mundingburra house. They replaced their worn-out vehicles and Deb has returned to work with the Queensland Education Department.

Townsville Little Theatre was well into rehearsals for Sir Terry Pratchett's play, *The Fifth Elephant*, when I returned from my southern sojourn in December-January. I had very little to do with the incredible costuming for this show, which included a range of dog, wolf and werewolf heads. The director says of the play that it 'is a great introduction to Pratchett's comic fantasy world where magic, not science, is the order of the day'.

The Multicultural Support Group is engaged in a thorough examination of all its policies, procedures and resources. This is calling for more Management Committee meetings and is challenging our capacities for finding the most efficient and responsible ways for a community-based NGO to balance a business model of operation with a social justice paradigm.

An excellent stimulus to Lenten reflection and prayer for me was a workshop facilitated by Sr Patty Fawkner sgs on the theme, *A Big Enough God*. We were invited to 'explore images of God, sitting with them in privacy, allowing them to percolate in our imagination and pluck the strings of our hearts, trusting that they will lead us more deeply into the mystery of God'.

Recently, we were privileged in Townsville to host Grail women from Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia for a week's workshop at the House of Prayer. (This is reported in more detail in the International News.) I was inspired

by what many people in PNG, including Grail women, manage to achieve in the midst of difficult social circumstances and restricted communication and transport facilities in a country with a mountainous terrain that demands expensive air travel to move from place to place. We received messages from PNG Grail women telling us of various projects around the country that continue despite all the challenges. One wrote of an income-generating project that is empowering women in a rural village in the East Sepik Province. 'Forty women', she writes, 'are now busy doing markets – buying and selling to get money to save in a microbank for PNG women. I'll be up there next week to let them know about a trainer coming to the village so that they will be able to get certificates in basic business practice.'

May the Easter message inspire us all to be people of courage and great hope.

Sheila Hawthorn

International

Meeting of National Leaders of The Grail, Papua New Guinea

At the invitation of the Australian National Team, Schola Manembe, Albina Namuesh and Monica Moka flew down to Townsville in North Queensland in mid-March for a week of reflection and evaluation. Unfortunately, Angela Bugatar was prevented at the last minute from travelling with them, so she waited in Port Moresby for their return and follow-up discussions and implementation. Schola, Albina and Angela form the PNG National Team and Monica is the National Treasurer.

The House of Prayer offered a quiet, peaceful venue, which was also comfortable and well-equipped. Kay Hunt, Anne Day and Alison Healey flew up from Sydney and they, with Sheila Hawthorn (when she was free of other commitments) met with our PNG sisters.

Our warmest thanks are due to the kind and helpful women who staff the House of Prayer each day. Half the group stayed in rooms at the House of Prayer; others with Deborah Pennington and Cheryl Vacchini who live nearby. Because it was dry, it was possible to walk between the two houses across peaceful parkland, normally flooded in the wet season. Cheryl's and Deborah's generous hospitality extended to several delicious evening meals for everyone during the week.

The PNG Grail revised and approved a set of new Structures in September 2009 and this National Team and Treasurer were elected and took up their roles in this new context. The purpose of the Townsville meeting was to give them an opportunity, away from their daily occupations and preoccupations, to review and discuss their experiences and take some decisions for the year ahead. They confront many difficulties arising out of cultural conflict between modernity and earlier traditions, political corruption

and bureaucratic mismanagement, critical social needs, violence against women, hugely expensive transport and communication services, foreign exploitation of their resources and environment. Yet, their local developmental projects are admirable.

70 – 100 Gathering in Ohio, USA

For the best part of two weeks beginning Pentecost Sunday, 19th May, over seventy women, roughly half from the USA and half from ‘the rest of the world’, will arrive in Cincinnati to attend a unique gathering of Grail women. The only qualification for it is to be aged between 70 and 100! Once all that energy of body, mind and spirit collects in one place, what might come of it? Five Australians will be there: Sheila Hawthorn, Gloria Lazzarini and Daphne Tighe from Queensland, Helen Gomez from New South Wales and Barbara Stewart from New Zealand.

Fran Warner has been invited to contribute her expertise in two International Grail teams and describes the work of both of these below:

Higher Education Fund

The Grail Higher Education Fund (HEF) has been made available through generous bequests from European Grail members and friends. The funds are provided as loans to Grail members wishing to complete tertiary study relevant to their Grail work, and in contexts where such study would otherwise be impossible for the Grail member. They may cover equipment such as a computer, living costs, tuition fees. The loans are expected to be repaid on completion of the study to enable more Grail women to access Higher Education in turn. The repayment may be made by ongoing Grail work. So far the HEF has enabled about ten women to begin or complete their tertiary studies – these women have mainly been in East Africa and the areas of study have included Religious Education and Spirituality, Social Development, Counselling, Education and Law.

This very practical assistance to the growth of Grail resources in East Africa and elsewhere is showing great results. Further donations can always be made through any Grail Centre.

International Exchange

As a member of the International Exchange Team of the Grail, I recently have received requests from St Teresa of Avila Girls’ Secondary School in Tanzania for a teacher of senior secondary students in any one of the following curriculum areas:

- Social Sciences and Humanities (History, Geography and/or Language);
- Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology and/or Geography);
- Business Studies (Economics, Commerce, Geography, Accountancy, History and/or Mathematics).

Persons available for a three-year minimum stay are preferred. While accommodation and meals would be subsidised, some payment for these, as well as travel to and from Tanzania, would need to be met by the volunteer. The language of instruction is English. More information is available from myself at fran.warner1a@gmail.com or from grailsydney@ozemail.com.au.

International Assistance Fund

Anne Day is Convenor of another team that administers an important international Fund, the purposes of which she summarises here:

This fund offers three kinds of support to Grail groupings or individuals who meet the criteria:

- Emergency assistance: short-term, quick transfer of money at a time of critical need;
- Retirement support: regular income for committed members no longer able to be employed in the work force and without adequate means of support;
- Savings scheme: an allocation of money available for three consecutive years to specified countries, with a view to their investing it in a way that will grow the funds for future use.

WITH STORM AND FIRE

A Pentecost homily

Dear brothers and sisters,

When we gather today to celebrate Pentecost, that is, God's powerful intervention in our world that transforms humans and their hearts, we do so in a time when many people, Christians as well, believe that this effective intervention by God no longer takes place. We call it alienation from God, total disregard of the Spirit. God no longer occurs in our society. When stating this, people compare our present with former times when one could live quite comfortably in the church. Things have changed a lot. Yet, must we call the times we live in godless? I do not think so at all. On the contrary, I am convinced that we live in a time totally filled and animated by the Spirit.

Let's look at today's feast day: Pentecost. The witnesses of the first Pentecost were all unable to express what had happened there. They describe the event using images, metaphors: God intervenes by means of a storm and fire. Storm and fire are by no means symbols promising comfort and harmony. On the contrary, they stand for tearing and burning down, for overthrow, destruction, fear, anxiety, insecurity. Could it even be, then, that the chaotic and the fearful are signs of God's intervening? Much more so than that which is harmonious and comfortable? Isn't it true that, where God intervenes effectively, things turn out rather to be uncomfortable?

For where God intervenes effectively, transformation will take place. Yet transformation and change cause disquiet, fear. Familiar beliefs that guarantee a certain cosiness are swept away as by a storm. Everything we have got so used to and has become superficial is burnt up as by a fire. This causes anxiety. Some people are unable to stand this and escape back into the past. Some people speak of the Holy Spirit but shy away from any kind of change. Fire and storm, however, will leave nothing unchanged. Therefore, I say: Since we live in times of great changes in our church, we live in times of God's potently working Spirit.

In a booklet, *The question of meaning and the quest for God*, written by Viktor Frankl and Pinchas Lapide, I found a nice comparison. It also deals with fire and storm. The small flame fears the storm, because the storm will quench it. Yet the big fire longs for the storm, because it will fan it further. If we assume that Pentecost has something to do with fire and storm, this comparison can tell us that those who carry only a small flame of faith within themselves must fear the storm. They will resist any change and their faith will cease to exist when the storm blows. Yet those, who have a deep and genuine faith burning with the fire of the love of God will be stimulated by the storm into a deepening of their faith, into a fanning of the fire. Some are afraid of any kind of change, as the small flame that fears the storm. Therefore, the movements in our church that want to return to the old traditions, do things the way they used to be done, are rather signs of little faith. Christian fundamentalism is not a sign of strong but of weak faith. The small flame is kept safe in a sectarian room which the storm cannot reach. Others, on the other hand, recognise God's work in movements of change, God's work that seeks to transform. They feel encouraged to shape the present, their society, their church. The storm fans their fire even more.

Let's once again look back at the first Pentecost 2000 years ago – at the apostles sitting there all afraid, behind closed doors. Suddenly, out of the blue, God changes their hearts, God intervenes mightily. They throw open the doors and windows and preach God's acts of salvation. All their fear has been swept away, the closed room of comfort has been burnt to ashes by the fire of God. An immense change and transformation comes to pass. Later the apostles will tell about the fire and the storm.

Here, at these first moments of the Church, at its hour of birth, as it were at the big bang of the Church, it is still all pure and authentic. It is still free from all the encrustations of coming times - from any institutional superstructure, from hierarchical clericalism, ideological dogmatism,

from any restraint of canon law. Here at the big bang of the Church it is what it is - full of the Spirit of God, the dwelling of God's Presence, the place of God's love and action, an occurrence that changes hearts and so a place where humans find themselves because God has found them.

Yet, all this just doesn't work without storm and fire. God wants to transform. And whoever is afraid of change had better not celebrate Pentecost. This is why I do not regard our times as godless or unspiritual – by no means. The Holy

Spirit is really roughening up the church. The storm is really blowing. Only the small flames fear it and want to turn back the clock for decades. The big flames long for a transformation into such a church as radiantly appeared in the Pentecostal big bang. As regards the church and religion, we really live in exciting, in Pentecostal times. Old habits and views are being jolted. New things will emerge.

*Rev. Franz Langstein, PP, St John Evangelist parish, Marburg, Germany. Pentecost 2012.
Translated by Helga Estor*

