

The Grail Newsletter

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THE REAL PRESENCE

The risen body of Christ which we receive in the Eucharist is the same body that was brutally nailed to the cross outside the walls of the holy city. The words of loving self-gift spoken at the last supper were the prelude to a day of torture, rejection and death. This is what it means for the God of Love to enter fully into our world. God enters into the heart of our darkness... The Son of God must break through our fatal human capacities for fear, for hate, for wounding what we do not understand, with the power of undying love. So we cannot truly celebrate the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist without committing ourselves to that other real presence of the Lord on our streets and in our prisons, those without food, clothes and shelter, the sick and the strangers in our midst. Jesus' words are clear: 'This is my body'...



We need a new vision:
brothers and sisters, not foreigners;
fellow human beings
sharing the good things of the earth,
not economic competitors;
an enrichment to our growing community,
not a threat to our way of life.
We need to hear Jesus' invitation to think differently,
to do things differently.

The Eucharist also reminds us that to belong to the Body of Christ has a cost. Opening to the outsider means a change of heart that can disrupt other relationships. It can bring misunderstanding and rejection to us too... But this is where the Lord went and he asks us to follow - to be his real presence in the world.

John Moffat, Jesuit Institute, South Africa, June 2014

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

North Queensland

Alison Healey, the second Principal of St Raphael's College for women, came to Townsville over the weekend of 28th-29th June to join the celebrations at Saints Catholic College, James Cook University. Saints College now incorporates St Raphael's College, St Paul's College and St Mary MacKillop College most recently built just five years ago. 2014 marks 50 years since the Grail established St Raphael's and first admitted young women residents to undertake university studies. A part of the celebrations was my planting a tree to honour those 50 years and the memorable contribution of Grail women to the former College. To quote from the program of ceremonies: 'The College Council is honoured that Sheila Hawthorn, former Deputy Principal of St Raphael's, has accepted our invitation to plant the tree, which, it is hoped, is the first of a grove of trees where students can relax, reflect and study in a peaceful setting. Sheila has contributed to the College over a long period, has kept association with many ex-students and continues to serve the people of North Queensland in a number of different ways'. The Saturday evening dinner and the Sunday morning Eucharist in the College chapel brought former and present staff and former and present students together in a spirit of warm friendship.

Roberta and Paul Michna have completed their move into their new rainforest home and their communication systems are all fully operative.

The Little Theatre performances in the *North Queensland Festival of Short Plays* received nine awards - for eight individual actors and a director. Four of the plays also received Best Production awards.

A phone call on 2nd July brought the sad news of the death of Pat Noonan. Pat and I have been very close friends since meeting at a Grail Summer School in Springwood in the Blue Mountains in 1956. The following year we went together as 'lay missionaries' to Wewak in Papua New Guinea. She was a true and loyal friend whom I shall miss very much. For several years I have watched with the deepest admiration as this sharp-minded, energetic person was painfully debilitated but never completely immobilised

by arthritis. She would never have allowed total immobility! The very large congregation at her Requiem was a great tribute to a generously loving family member, a devoutly faithful parishioner, a respected citizen of Mackay and a dutiful member of several organisations including the Catholic Women's League, the Mackay Choral Society, the Older Women's Network and the Probus Club. Pat also maintained strong connections with quite a number of our Wewak colleagues now scattered around the world – in Wewak itself and in continental Europe, USA, Ireland, New Zealand and, of course, Australia. May she rest in peace.

Crescentia Lementi, a founding member of the Grail in Papua New Guinea, spent a very full week here in July, before continuing her journey south to Brisbane and Sydney. Crescentia is no stranger to Townsville, having spent some months here in 1987 doing a course of training to prepare her for managing the Catholic Bookshop in Wewak. Since her last visit in 2008, she has noticed many changes in familiar places, such as St Raphael's College, the House of Prayer, the city's buildings and roads and the St Vincent de Paul bookshop where she had gained practical experience during her course.

When we North Queensland Grail members gather in August, we will be rejoicing with Deborah Pennington on her 50th birthday and praying for a safe and enjoyable overseas journey for Margaret Tranter, Andrew and family members.

I was able to join the Brisbane Grail women and others from Victoria and New South Wales at the National Grail Assembly in Sydney in June. Once again, a blessed opportunity to reflect deeply and discuss frankly: how may we live well our commitment to the vision and mission of the Grail in face of the challenges of the contemporary world?

After the 'icy blanket over Queensland' in July (a daily temperature range of 7 – 12 degrees), we, and the many tourists in Townsville now, are appreciating delightful weather. The mango trees seem to be enjoying it, too, judging by the masses of copper blossom adorning them and beautifying the landscape.

Sheila Hawthorn

Brisbane

Bird song fills the air as I sit here in our garden, soaking up the warmth of the winter sun after a cold start to the morning (down to 5 degrees is cold for us). We have had a pattern of these chilly, crisp mornings, which usually indicate a glorious day of clear blue skies to follow. It is such a day today. Our kaffir lime tree, a grafted variety, is laden with fruit resembling bush lemons. Passionfruit are still ripening on our vines which have borne prolifically these past months. It is not difficult to stop, sit quietly and simply listen to the voice of creation in this moment and be present to the beauty of the invisible embrace of love. 'Be still and know that I am God.' (Psalm 46:10)

All nine members of the Brisbane group were able to take time out of their busy lives to attend the National Assembly held in Sydney on the long weekend in June, coinciding with the feast of Pentecost. For Ann Aboud and Jay Rosales Scoullar it was their first experience of an Assembly. Having the entire group attend enriched us: it offered us inspiration for deepening our own commitment to the Grail vision and will help us to reflect together. Without a Grail Centre we are challenged again to explore new ways in which we can gather and grow the Grail in Brisbane. Perhaps we could reflect on the questions posed by a leading theologian, who recently visited Sydney, 'When do I feel most fully alive?' and 'What breaks my heart?'

In February, I responded to an email asking for a volunteer to tutor a young Karen schoolgirl, who lives at Sandgate and attends Milpera School. Because Paw suffered a broken leg after a fall at the ice-skating rink, I have gone to her home each Wednesday evening instead of meeting at the Community Centre. I am greeted at the door with smiles, shining eyes and joyful faces from Paw's two younger sisters and baby brother. Hla, the seven-year-old, has the best command of English and asks me if I have brought all the picture books I had last time. A modern version of 'Ten in the bed' is the most popular. Tears well up in my eyes as Hla sits on the floor with Chit Chit, her mother, and helps her to read the stories. The children are simply being children, sharing their love of life. There are squeals of delight as they turn the pages and recognise the numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, in the

book, 'Five little ducks'. I know I have been gifted by meeting this family, who escaped persecution in their own country. I was invited to attend a cultural celebration with the Karen community of Brisbane in early August. Friendship needs no words to express itself, just a willingness to share love.

The Vidler family travelled to the far west of Queensland in the recent school holidays, visiting Rolleston where Dominic works, Tambo where Jill taught years ago and Longreach, which is experiencing the worst drought in 100 years. They covered 2700 km and the children by now will have a great appreciation of the land that many don't get the chance to visit.

Elizabeth Lancaster would like to thank all those who supported her with their prayers, phone calls, visits, cards and practical expressions of help during her recent serious illness. She is now on the way to recovery with a good outcome anticipated.

The YCW Past Members Association celebrated 50 years of existence and at the same time closed their organisation on Saturday, 23 August. The members came from the following formative groups: the Young Christian Students, the Grail, the National Catholic Girls Movement, the Young Christian Workers (Girls), and, after 1970, simply the Young Christian Workers. The Christian Family Movement was a natural extension of the YCW, which in the Brisbane Archdiocese, lapsed with the formation of the Parish Pastoral Councils. As President Anne Norman said in March, 'We married, raised families, joined religious orders with a spectacular range of charisms. We were active in the Parents and Friends Associations at our schools. Many are still involved in a variety of church and community groups... With the emphasis on evangelisation by three recent popes, our theology and methodology based on Joseph Cardijn's understanding of an active-reflective praxis, may be just what the Church needs'.

Sadly, 31st July marked the final day of Helen Jeffcoat's 27-year career as Deputy Librarian at the Supreme Court of Queensland Library. Helen has decided to seize the moment and will attend the international ongoing formation program in Portugal in October. She's excited at the opportunity. We wish her every blessing as she steps into the future.

Mary Nelson

Sydney

When we last wrote news we were preparing for the National Assembly, which occurs every four years. The venue this year was St Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney, very conveniently situated for many of our Sydney members, but we made a special effort to have all the participants live together in the Place, rather than have Sydney folk remain at home and travel back and forth. Sharing the costs equally among us and subsidising those with the heaviest financial burden made it possible for more to attend and led to a fruitful and heartening outcome. The National Team have written a short report on the Assembly in this Newsletter.

The Book Club continues to meet on the last Friday evening of the month in members' homes. Anyone interested should contact the Sydney Centre. The announcement of Maya Angelou's death this year led us to turn to the first book of her 7-book autobiographical series, *I know why the caged bird sings*. What a treat that was for everyone, including those who were re-reading it. We have chosen the books for the remaining two meetings in September and October: John Banville's *The Sea* and Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces*. In November, we always close the year's activities with a dinner to which we each bring a poem or a short piece of prose that we treasure and share it during the meal.

Food for the Soul on Wednesday evenings, 7.30 – 9 pm, continues and is always open to anyone who would like to join in at any time. No preparatory reading is needed. The evening follows the form and style of *lectio divina*, ie, reading a text followed by silent contemplation and concluding with a sharing of insights as participants wish. After Easter, we took up the *Book of Revelation* (the *Apocalypse*) using *Unveiling Empire* by Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther as a guide to our interpreting a book we had all found difficult. It was a highly enlightening experience to realise how much John of Patmos speaks to our time. We go into September having just completed a series of readings from Scripture prompted by Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God*, again enjoyable and challenging.

Tricia Gemmell, the convener of *Food for the Soul*, also leads a weekday morning reflection, once every two months on a Tuesday, 10 am to noon. This year's series takes up writings of women mystics and seems to be

attracting an increasing number of participants. On Tuesday 16th September, the group will explore some writings of Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jewish woman who has left us an extraordinary account of her spiritual journey in a diary between 1941 and 1943, and who perished at the age of 29 in Auschwitz. Contact Tricia or the Grail Centre if you would like to join this session or following ones: pagemmell@tpg.com.au or grailsydney@ozemail.com.au (9955 3053).

In mid-August we employed an Administrative Assistant to help in the Sydney office for a few hours a week. She is Elsie Tanudji, herself from a Chinese family in Penang, her husband a Chinese Indonesian. Their two daughters attend Loreto Kirribilli. We welcome her presence and skills and hope she will be happy here.

For some weeks now the Sydney Centre has been undergoing substantial repairs and maintenance. There is still quite a lot not yet finished; it would be good to be able to put it behind us by the year's end. We're grateful for the funding offered to Grail Centres for these purposes by the International Leadership Team.

Alison Healey returned from South Africa at the end of June full of admiration for the diverse and vibrant Grail group there, who came together at the Mariannhill Monastery outside Durban for their National Assembly just a week after ours. They had decided to limit the 'business' sessions of the Assembly as far as possible so as to spend most of the time at a deeper level of communication with one another, based in reflection on their experience and on Scriptural and other texts. It was a real privilege for Alison to be there as a resource person for those days. The South African Grail was engaged in the struggle of the oppressed through the apartheid years and continues faithfully to work for justice and care for both the people and the ecology of South Africa.

Since our last Newsletter, we have farewelled three women whose lives intersected with those of Australian Grail women for varying periods of time and who are remembered with love and admiration for their commitment in service to others. The Requiem for Pat Kent, rsm, was held in the Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta. Pat became a member of the Grail when she was a student at Sydney University. She then spent many years

managing the Catholic Bookshop in Suva, Fiji, before returning home and entering the convent of the Sisters of Mercy. Sheila Hawthorn has written about Pat Noonan in her news from North Queensland. The third is Kathleen (Beatrice) Sheehy, another Queenslander, who was a nucleus member of The Grail (1941-71). For approximately half of that time, Kath worked overseas – assisting in the international formation programs in the Netherlands, as National President of The Grail in South Africa and as leader of The Grail in Singapore.

Crescentia Lementi from the Grail in Wewak, Papua New Guinea, is visiting us at this time. We have asked her to write something. It appears later under ‘National News’.

Fran Warner has written an update on the *Personal Journals for Prisoners* project that we have informed you about in earlier Newsletters.

Sydney Grail group

Personal journals for prisoners

Recently several Grail members joined with a small group of parishioners at St Joseph’s Newtown for a workshop on *Prison Journals of Healing and Hope*. Discussion ranged over the following questions:

What conditions produce criminality? What does prison life do to those on the inside? Do jails work? What was Jesus’ response to society’s outsiders? What can we do to bring more humanity to prison life? Maybe... Prison Journals.

The journals and the story of their use will be shared in several other parishes and community groups in the months ahead.

We have informed you already about this Sydney Grail project of personal journals for prisoners. We are now seeking to sell the last couple of hundred of the 2000 we printed. Copies are sold for \$10 each; and, for each one sold, one is given free to a prisoner by a prison chaplain or pastoral worker. If you would like to be part of this project, contact the Sydney Grail Centre and copies can be sent to you. grailsydney@ozemail.com.au Telephone (61-2) 9955 3053.

Fran Warner

Melbourne

Andrea Venier's father, Peter, had yet further surgery for his persistent cancer and has now been told that no more treatment can be given him. He is now receiving palliative care in a high care facility and is markedly weakening with the passing of each day. We pray for him, his wife Gemma and all the family in this sad and difficult time.

Of course, this has affected Andrea's plans for facilitating and organising some new development in the Grail in Melbourne. In the coming weeks, she will work fewer hours at the Grail Secretariat in Balwyn. It is unlikely, too, that she will be able to participate in the international formation program in Portugal in October-November.

Meanwhile, the new *lectio divina* group meeting weekly at the Grail house is finding the experience spiritually invigorating and very enjoyable. Ann Niall has brought many improvements to the house and its contents. The office and its resources and files are getting an overhaul. The Regional Group met in August for further planning. The next meeting will be in October. Dinny Culican Ward has offered to speak of the times she spent in the Middle East with her archaeologist husband, Bill Culican. We look forward to her insights.

Melbourne Grail group

National News

Australian National Grail Assembly

On the long weekend of 6th - 9th June, we gathered at the St Mary MacKillop Centre in North Sydney to reflect, celebrate and plan. We were forty Australian Grail members from Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and places in between. Many of us have known each other for a long time but we joyfully welcomed new members to their first National Assembly and others who had not attended for some time. The Centre is a peaceful oasis in

the midst of a busy city, made more special when we could visit the burial place of St Mary MacKillop.

The theme of the Assembly was: How does our Grail heritage help us to be true to our Grail vision in the dominant culture today and how will we live this vision over the next four years? We pondered, prayed, shared our experiences and listened to speakers expand on this theme. It was the weekend of the Feast of Pentecost and, as we welcomed everyone, we remembered dear members who had left this world since our last Assembly four years ago and told stories of how they had ‘embodied the vision’ of the International Grail in their lives. We also celebrated those members who have been in the Grail longer than 50 years.

We took an ‘Appreciative Enquiry’ approach to identify high points on our Grail journey and what made them so. We shared what we value in the Grail and affirmed the core factors which give life to it. We reflected on the global trends, positive and negative, impacting on our movement and gave voice to what we thought the world was calling for from the Grail.

We farewelled each other after three days of prayer, reflection and discussion with heartening hopes and plans for the future and with the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the Grail ‘burning within us’ (cf. the two disciples’ encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus).

Kay Hunt, Mary Nelson and Jill Herbert (National Team)

After the Assembly

Over eighteen months ago, we commenced our preparations for our recent National Assembly. We wish to thank everyone who came from near and far. We hope that for each of you there is a special memory that you hold dear in your heart. Perhaps you met a new member and were able to linger over a cup of tea to learn more about her. Or is it the joy you felt on seeing a familiar face you had not seen in years? Perhaps it is the tears you saw on someone’s cheek during our opening liturgy; or the sense of your own vulnerability cracked open as you listened to the heartfelt sharing. Let us treasure these tender moments. This is what happens when we gather as Grail women opening to the spirit of love and compassion in our midst.

Now we have to get on with the nitty gritty! Action! We encourage the members of each Regional Group to reflect on their dreams and support one another in helping them to bear fruit.

Sheila issued us a challenge to connect with our Grail friends in Papua New Guinea. Let us start thinking about how we can make this happen. There are Grail groups in Wewak, Port Moresby, Madang, Rabaul and Manus Island. You may not know anyone from PNG personally; this doesn't really matter. We need to affirm one another, just the same. I have a suggestion that we send greeting cards for the Feast of All Saints. Make a card, recycle a card, enclose a photo perhaps – be creative. Jill Herbert has agreed to coordinate collecting them. Is anyone willing to help her in this? It can take weeks for mail to PNG to reach its destination, so the sooner we can get started, the better. Let's make this happen!

Kay Hunt and I will have the privilege of celebrating the Feast of All Saints at Golega in Portugal at the International Formation Program.

Finally, we need a new National Team to take us forward in the next four years. Please consider making yourself available. The outgoing team will give you every support.

Mary Nelson

Mamie O'Keeffe's Unit In Brisbane

The Grail in Australia has been the recipient of a number of generous benefactions which have enabled it to survive difficult times. Mamie O'Keeffe's bequest of her apartment in Coorparoo, Brisbane, is one of these generous gifts we acknowledge with appreciation and gratitude.

Mamie was the John Oxley Librarian for about twenty years. This Library holds unique Queensland resources including diaries, manuscripts, art works, photographs, original maps and plans and oral histories. She was also honorary librarian for the Royal Historical Society of Queensland for many years.

Mamie attended the first Grail Winter School for young women in Brisbane in 1938, the year she began university studies. Judith Bouwman inspired her and Mamie maintained her connections in the Grail for the rest of her life.

For many years now, the rental we received from Mamie's gifted property has provided some funds for the use of the National Team. This year, the decision was taken to sell the unit and benefit from Mamie's bequest in another way. She, and her belief in the Grail, will remain in our affectionate memory.

*Acknowledging with thanks the research and writing of Jan O'Donoghue
(Grail Brisbane)*

From Crescentia Lementi

Greetings to everyone from the Grail in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

I am here in Australia later than I intended to be. Actually, I was invited to come to attend the Australian Grail National Assembly in Sydney and then to stay for a month or two to visit Grail groups and appraise their projects before returning home. I was held up in Port Moresby for six weeks getting my passport renewed and my visa – a month for the passport and another 10 days for the visa. I must thank my nephew Greg Sowni, his cousin Rose Keni, and Gabriel Waken for their professional guidance and precious time which greatly helped me. While in Port Moresby, I attended one of the Grail meetings with Elizabeth Waken, Theresia Maki and Rose Maule where we reviewed our National Structures. We had good discussion in preparation for the PNG National Assembly in September. We also celebrated a Pentecost *agape* in Moresby.

On 22nd July, I departed PNG for Townsville via Cairns. Sheila met me. We visited what was formerly St Raphael's College and called in to the Good Shepherd Home to visit Erikah Kyle on the way home. Sheila also took me to the office of the Multicultural Support Group, where I met Rahila Talic who works there, as well as others meeting there. Rahila invited me to a gathering of women in Ross River Road Park. I enjoyed meeting these women from all parts of the world – from Peru, Congo, Brazil, Iran, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea. We had fun playing volley ball and did some yoga exercises, too.

I left Townsville for Brisbane in time to attend a memorial Mass for Pat Noonan. The Mass was held in the chapel of the house of the Missionaries of the Divine Word. Fr Don Grant svd, who himself had been in Wewak for

several years, led the celebration and we sang in both English and Pidgin. I stayed with Maggie Jenatsch and her husband, Reto (formerly from Wewak, now in Ferny Hills) and had the chance to attend one of the Brisbane Grail meetings. After it, Jill Herbert, Maggie and I went out to dinner and had a very good time together despite the cold wintry night. The day I left for Sydney, Jill and Patrick invited the Jenatsch family to a farewell barbecue breakfast in their back yard – a very nice family gathering to celebrate also the birthdays of Reto and Claudie on 7th and 14th August.

Here in Sydney, it has been very cold – not good weather for going out much, but I have been to Manly with Helen Gomez. We are still hoping for warmer days before I leave. In the meantime, I am joining in everything that happens in the Grail house. Alison and I have read and discussed all the various presentations in the Report on the International Nucleus Meeting in Portugal last year. I found them very interesting and will take some copies home with me. I have been happy to join in the *Food for the Soul* evenings that Ruth Crowe has been leading. And I've been doing a lot of enjoyable reading.

Before I finish, I want to tell you of an important development in the PNG Grail last year when five Rabaul women made their commitment in the Grail. There is a much larger group of women there meeting regularly to prepare to do the same. So the Grail is now in five provinces – East Sepik, Central, Manus, Madang and East New Britain. Last year, Schola Manembe, the member of the National Team responsible for Formation, and I worked together reviewing our formation materials and methods, both for the induction of new women and for ongoing formation of already committed members. She then asked me to go with her to Rabaul for a week's program with the Rabaul women before the commitment celebration. It was a very encouraging experience and I believe that these women have the capacity to make a strong contribution in the future.

I leave Australia, out of Brisbane, on 19th September. A big 'thank you' to the Grail women in Sydney, especially for the hospitality and openness in the Grail house, where I was happy to meet Nour and Lauren, the two young women living there.

Crescentia

BLESSING THE SPACE BETWEEN US

Reflecting on commitment in the Grail

An international team of six has launched a process of reflection and discernment among Grail members around the world which will extend through 2015. This team consists of Maria Carlos Ramos (Portugal), Christa Werner (Germany), Bibi Helgeson (Sweden), Joyce Minkler (USA), Lorna Bowman (Canada) and Regina Bashaasha (Uganda).

They aim to stimulate both wide and deep exchange on how we live our commitments in our different contexts, how we understand and articulate our commitment in the Grail and how our diverse commitments inter-relate locally, nationally and internationally.

'To Bless the Space Between Us' is the title of a book by John O' Donohue. He writes: 'It would be infinitely lonely to live in a world without blessings. The word *blessing* evokes a sense of warmth and protection; it suggests that no life is alone or unreachable. Each life is clothed in raiment of spirit that secretly links it to everything else. Though suffering and chaos befall us, they can never quench that inner light of providence'.

There is space around and between all of us and we know from experience that good community life depends on each one allowing and respecting others' space. So, space, is a positive experience. But it ceases to be so when it becomes a growing distancing between people, an experience of increasing separation. Hence the need for God's blessing upon it. It is vitally important that the Grail provides 'blessed space' for all of us.

