

The Grail Newsletter

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Conflict between narratives of abundance and of scarcity is a problem confronting us. The gospel story of abundance asserts that we originated in the magnificent, inexplicable love of a God who loved, and loves, the world into generous being... And the story of abundance says that our lives will end in God, and that this well-being cannot be taken from us. In the words of St Paul, neither life nor death nor angels nor principalities nor things - nothing can separate us from God.

What we know about our beginnings and our endings, then, creates a different kind of present tense for us. Rather than live according to the myth of scarcity whereby we are driven, controlling, anxious, frantic, greedy, may we live according to an ethic of abundance, sufficiently at home and at peace to be hospitable and to care about others as we have been cared for.

{from Walter Brueggeman, 'The liturgy of abundance; the myth of scarcity' }

MAY YOU KNOW THE ABUNDANCE OF GOD'S LOVE THIS CHRISTMAS

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Editor's Note

I particularly asked Mary this year to write again about the earthquake in Christchurch. She gave us a powerful account of the experience at the time of greatest destruction but I felt we needed to know more about the period following those dramatic and catastrophic events.

I've been thinking a lot this year about 'aftermaths'.

I am sure the centenary of the first world war is at least partly responsible for this.

We need to be attentive to the aftermath of things.

Mary helps us to do so with this, her second 'letter from New Zealand'.

Alison Healey

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News from here and there

Melbourne

At our last Regional Group meeting in October, we dealt with our 'business' as expeditiously as we could so that we could give time to a presentation by Dinny Culican Ward, entitled 'Travels of an archaeologist's wife'. Dinny referenced in her talk Agatha Christie's stories and experiences, as she was also the wife of an archaeologist, Sir Max Mallowan, and had travelled some of the same areas of the Middle East as Bill and Dinny did in the 1950s. We had a fascinating afternoon, following Dinny's narrative with a selection of maps and photographs she had reproduced for us. Dinny met Bill at university in Edinburgh where she joined in a summer dig at Hadrian's Wall. After their wedding, they travelled to Jerusalem via Paris and Alexandria. They lived in Jerusalem for a time, where Dinny undertook some teaching while Bill worked on a dig in Jericho. Dinny described vividly everyday conditions and incidents, inserting many well-remembered Arabic phrases in her lively talk. One of many highlights for her was seeing the Dead Sea Scrolls being pieced together. The threat of war led to Dinny and Bill's return to Edinburgh, where they started a family, and soon after emigrated to Melbourne where Bill took up his position in archaeology at Melbourne University. While he continued his projects in the Middle East, Dinny's archaeological travels ceased as she embraced her busy life with a growing family and her teaching community involvements. Thank you, Dinny, for such an engaging and inspiring presentation!

On a more mundane note, members were pleased with the fresh appearance of the Grail House and garden to which Ann Niall and Andrea Venier have given their attention. There are a few more repairs and arrangements still to be made in readiness for the New Year. Ann's suggestion that we might rent out a room with use of the facilities to an adult student next year met with general support and she will pursue this.

Ann Woodruff's bequest to the Grail was gratefully acknowledged and Dawn McGann suggested that we establish an annual 'Ann Woodruff lecture' devoted to some perspective on 'the advancement of women', which

was Ann's stated intention for the use of her be-quest. There was unanimous support for this.

June and Laurie Ryan once again offered their home as the venue for an End of Year Mass set for Sunday, 7th December at 5.00pm, followed by a shared supper. June's cousin and Redemptorist priest, Michael Mason, will celebrate the Eucharist with us, as he has done now for several years. This is an evening we all look forward to.

We began our October meeting with some memorial prayer for Geraldine Rush, a leader in the Grail movement of young women in Melbourne in the 1940s and a faithful friend through the decades since. Gerry was an attentive, loving mother of five children with a deep interest in literature and history. She became a teacher of history, much admired by her peers and her students. One year she wrote a poem to mark the graduation of her Year 12 students and it was read by her son, David, at her farewell Eucharist.

It is the End.

But what is the End?

It comes with the sunset

and the closing of the day;

with December

and the waning of the year.

Dry and brittle are the leaves of autumn;

they die

and fall

and the gaunt tree branches

stand as witnesses to death.

The grain of wheat,

hidden in the soil

dies; it is the end.

But what is the End?

It is a new beginning!

Wishing all who receive this many blessings in this hope-filled time of Advent and Christmas,

Grail women in Melbourne

Sydney

At our last Regional Group meeting in Sydney in November we concentrated on planning for 2015. We turned to the Report from our National Assembly in June this year to make sure we didn't miss anything important from those productive days. Now a tentative time-table has been drawn up and will be finalised in January. On it are the maintenance tasks in 'Ávila', the Sydney Centre, which we didn't manage to complete this year after all.

The accumulated news of the last months ranges over many topics. To begin with the regular items:

We decided to turn to the Book of Genesis for our Wednesday evening *lectio divina* reflections over the last weeks. We had spent time with the Creation story before, but not with the following chapters. So we took up the narrative with Cain and Abel and got as far as Isaac and Rebecca when it was time to stop for this year. Contemplating these stories as adults brings deeper understanding of their significance for our lives as we, too, are called to be people who 'walk with God'.

A related program held every second month on Tuesday mornings has focussed on writings of women mystics. Simone Weil was the subject of the last of these in mid-November. The response to these has led Tricia Gemmell to offer three of them again next year for two hours on a Saturday morning.

This year's Advent program of preparation of our hearts and minds for Christmas consists of two Wednesday evening gatherings on two themes: *Abundance* and *Joy*. On 3rd Dec-ember Janet O'Sullivan, an economist, and

theologian Tricia Gemmell, will offer some thoughts on the abundance of God and the narrative of scarcity that pervades our con-temporary world. They will ask: How do our lives reflect the one or the other of these? *The Joy of the Gospel* is the title of an exhortation of Pope Francis to the whole church (2013). On 10th December, we will together bring our experience to a reflection on texts about joy.

The Friday Book Club met for the last time on 5th December at the home of Sonia and George Mrva for a pre-Christmas meal and for each of us to share a favourite poem or prose excerpt. We also made a list of suggested texts for next year. Our November discussion of Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces* was deeply appreciative of her poetic imagination and insight. It's a book that calls for several readings.

We can joyfully announce that the parishioners of the three churches in the North Sydney parish responded to our presentation on the project, Personal Journals for Prisoners, with such compassion and generosity over a weekend in mid-November that we sold all we had left. We had planned to speak and sell at all six Masses, but ran out at the fifth and so had to absent ourselves from the sixth. We sold more than 200 and, with donations, have around 250 more to be distributed in our prisons. As we said to the good people who so willingly supported the project, their gift to the men and women who receive the journal is not only the journal itself but the prisoners' realisation that someone outside has thought and cared about them. There are many to thank for this successful completion of a project well done: the small team that produced the publication, particularly Elizabeth Lee, Anne Marie George and Marian Kelly; other Grail members and friends who helped to sell it and all who shared in this collective act of caring.

On the eve of All Saints Day we had a dinner party at the Centre with three things in mind to celebrate. We wanted to invite the three Jesuits in the parish team to dinner to affirm and honour their generous ministry in the community; it was the Grail's foundation day; and 2014 marks 60 years of Grail life and work in 'Avila'. Thirty of us sat at five tables to enjoy one another's company and a delicious dinner collectively provided, along with a mix of prayers and readings. Beginning with an acknowledgment of the traditional owners of the land, followed by a lively Gaelic house blessing,

we paused between courses to listen to poets, one of whom was in our midst, and ended the evening with the uplifting vision of a world united and harmonious from Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party*.

The ecumenical Australian Association for Mission Studies held its triennial conference in Adelaide this year with the title, *Margins, Mission and Diversity*. The keynote speaker, Anthony Gittins, developed each of the themes in the title brilliantly and profoundly. Alison Healey, long-time member of the Association, and Anne Day very much enjoyed their participation. There was an impressive number of young people there - theology students and workers in different Christian mission contexts. Their enthusiasm and energy together with the experience and wisdom of the older men and women present made the conference an encouraging experience.

Jane Harris, formerly from South Africa, was featured in television news in September on the occasion of the launch of a fine exhibition in the Customs House titled *Memories of the Struggle: Australians against Apartheid*.

Two newly published books arrived in the mail recently which give us much pleasure. Edmund Campion, priest historian of the Sydney archdiocese, sent a copy of his latest book, *Australian Catholic Lives* (David Lovell Publishing), which in brief narratives offers the reader an insight into the lives of some seventy men and women. His intention is to tell the Catholic story of Australia 'not as a history of popes and bishops but as a narrative from below'. The cumulative effect is powerful. Helga Griffin sent from Canberra the gift of her most recent publication, *Frontier Town: a History of Early Townsville and Hinterland 1864-84*. This book, originally a university thesis, is the first in a series published by the North Queensland History Preservation Society and is an absorbing read, especially for those who know the city and region. A big 'thank you' to both these good friends.

Kay Hunt, a member of the International Formation Team, returned home in early November from a month-long program in Portugal, which seemed to touch people deeply. While Kay has returned to Sydney, Sonia Laverty has completed her preparations to leave it. Sonia has sold up her inner-city home in Camperdown and moved to Mullumbimby on the north coast where

her sisters, Shan and Terry, and their families are living. We do hope she will come visiting in the new year.

In late September, Mary McDearmid and her sister, Sarah, arranged a delightful afternoon party in 'Avila' for their mother, Isabel, and her friends. Isabel, who has participated over the years in many Grail meetings, will have her hundredth birthday in December and decided to celebrate it early. We pray God's blessings on her.

Matthew, the husband of Nellie (Helene) Kurian, who attended this year's program of Introduction to the Grail, died on 11th November after a long illness. Helen Gomez attended the funeral service, taking with her our sympathy and best wishes to Nellie.

The city centre of Gunawirra, the project initiated by Norma Tracey with aboriginal families, has moved from Redfern to a more spacious location in Rozelle.

Sonia Mrva-Montoya came to Australia from Peru after graduating from Lima University. In her first year in Sydney, Sonia lived in 'Avila' while she learned English. In her English language course she met George Mrva, an engineer from Czechoslovakia, and six months later they married and have an only son, Dushan, an artist and teacher of art. Alison and Sonia's brother, Edwin, joined Sonia and George at a very impressive function held recently in the world-honoured building at 28 Broadway, the one with the vertical gardens. Sonia has written an account of the evening below:

'Migration: Identity and Memory was the name of the project launched by Gabriel Pacheco, Consul General of Peru, on the 20th November at the 8x10 Art Gallery, in the Central Park Building, Sydney. The project consisted of both a photographic portrait exhibition and a book that contains testimonial interviews of twenty Latin American women from Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela, who migrated to Australia at different times. Each participant was asked three basic questions: Why and when did you come to Australia? What memories do you have of your childhood? Are you satisfied with what you have been able to achieve in Australia?

This project was sponsored by the Australian Hispanic Women's Business Network (AHWBN) and was created by the Mexican artist and art curator,

Susana Enriquez. Susana writes in her introduction to the book, “In these testimonies there is a common thread that unites them (the women), which is an important part of Latin American idiosyncrasy: attachment to family. In this project I used photography and video to document the personality of each woman and the object (she holds for the portrait), which represents a memory or emotional bond with the past, as a source for a creative approach. At the same time, there is a reflection on how this experience of migration and emotional connection through memory can be a source of artistic initiatives”.

I was one of the women who participated in the project. My testimonial starts with, “I arrived in Australia on the 1st January 1971. The reason for my migration was of an existential nature. I had finalised my university studies and attained a teaching degree in Spanish Language and Literature. I wanted to pursue some challenges that would enable me to widen my experience. I was very keen to undertake projects that would enrich me intellectually. I had read the works of Simone de Beauvoir who influenced my personality and my general ideology as a woman”.

The launch at the gallery was a lovely and interesting event. The presence at the exhibition of my husband, George, my brother, Edwin, and Alison, my long-time friend, made the evening more significant for me’.

We cannot close our news without expressing our loving good wishes to Biddy Kennedy and Catherine Mullane, both of whom recently celebrated birthdays, both women of great heart and spirit to whom we owe much.

We wish you joy and hope this Christmas.

Sydney Grail members

Brisbane

Hello from Brisbane.

Two of our group have just returned from attending the month of formation, an international Grail program at Golega, Portugal. Mary Nelson, with Kay Hunt, was attending as a facilitator and Helen Jeffcoat as a participant. All reported that it was a life-changing experience. It was an opportunity to live

with Grail women from many nations, experience the hospitality of the five Portuguese Grail members who live in the Golega house, be immersed in prayer and mindfulness for a few short weeks and even learn a little Portuguese! We were there for Mary's 60th birthday, an event made much of by all, and for the November 1st Feast of All Saints. This celebration ended with an out-of-doors liturgy, where it got so dark that we had to use our mobiles as flash-lights to make out the readings!

In October, the unit in Brisbane bequeathed to the Grail 17 years ago by Mamie O'Keeffe was sold, the decision being made as the best way of continuing to benefit from the resource, considering the ongoing costs of maintaining it as a rental property. In memory of Mamie's generous gift, we have arranged for a plaque in her honour to be added to the Wall of Remembrance at her parish church, Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Coorparoo. The inscription reads:

Mary (Mamie) O'Keeffe

1920 - 1997

BA (Qld) 1941, Librarian

Inspired by the vision and ethos of The Grail

With gratitude, The Grail in Australia, 2014.

It was a pleasure to have Denise Whip join us from Sydney for our November meeting. Sadly, Gloria Lazzarini was not with us. Because of continuing ill health, Gloria, with the help of her family, was in the process of moving to supported accommodation in Slacks Creek. She and her family have our prayers and support at this stressful time in their lives.

In 2015, Mary and Darryl Nelson will be welcoming their daughter Monique back in Brisbane. Monique has completed two years' teaching at Marist College in Emerald in Central Queensland and next year will teach at Peter Claver College.

Our congratulations to Ann Aboud on her election to the National Team together with Andrea Venier and Tricia Gemmell, and our sincere thanks to

Mary Nelson and Jill Herbert here in Brisbane and Kay Hunt in Sydney who are concluding their terms of office. A job well done.

Helen Jeffcoat

North Queensland

Since the last Newsletter I have enjoyed a trip to Norfolk Island with a small group from the Townsville Little Theatre (TLT) to participate in the Norfolk Island annual Drama Festival. TLT took such a minimum-cast play that I had a backstage role! The high standard of the plays from New Zealand, Armidale (NSW), Brisbane, Townsville and Norfolk Island itself made the festival highly enjoyable. TLT received one of the eight awards. As I travelled up and down steep inclines, around breath-taking bends on narrow roads where cattle have the right of way, I frequently reflected that, whatever about the peaceful Pacific at this point in time, its ancient geological and climatic events must have been anything but peaceful!

The House of Prayer community has recently been saddened by the deaths of Beverley Boulton, an original and very faithful member for more than 30 years, and Kim Bellert, a young, vivacious, generous and efficient Co-ordinator of the House for just a few years until stricken by a melanoma in 2013. May they rest in peace. Some Grail women will remember Beverley's husband, John, when he was a member of St Raphael's College Council. In recent years, the Australian and Papua New Guinea Grail have appreciated Kim's hospitality when they held residential formation programs at the House of Prayer.

This year it is easy to see why the Grail Award was shared by two young academic women at Saints Catholic College. Addrienne Bannes and Anne D'Netto have resided at the College for five years and four years respectively, have been very active in the Chapel community for all that time and have always been keenly involved in College life. Addrienne is currently completing her fifth year of Medicine studies and always shows integrity and honesty in everything she does. Anne, studying Veterinary Science, is a cheerful, trustworthy person. She enjoys her participation in the chapel choir and enthusiastically encourages her fellow residents to join in College activities and community events setting an example herself

whenever she can. I was very pleased to attend the College Valedictory Dinner and present the award to these two excellent role models and great assets to the College.

Margaret Tranter and Andrew Wood have returned safely from their very enjoyable trip overseas and are back home on the Atherton Tablelands hoping and praying, like so many others, that rain will soon come. Townsville gardens can now only get a drink from the sprinklers for a few hours two days a week. For some years sprinklers were limited to three days per week.

On 1st November a small group of us gathered in a cool, comfortable section of a rainforest area in Townsville 'to honour Grail women, celebrate their progress and draw inspiration from them'. The focus of the reflection and discussion was the 'possibility of another world' as Arundhati Roy expressed it. In sharing about Grail vision, commitment and activities in many parts of the world, it was noted that 'we are already actively engaged in ushering this "other world" in'. Of course, hope must spring eternal in the human heart!

In a recent conversation with Roberta Michna, it is clear that she and Paul are well settled into their rainforest lifestyle. Like Margaret and Andrew, they are devoting much time and energy to replenishing and nurturing their piece of the forest. They are quite satisfied with their self-sufficient water supply from tanks on the buildings. Their son, Fred, continues his academic journey as he grapples with a Masters program in Melbourne.

Her *Aquapella* choir commitment, the Townsville Folk Club, her grandson, Isaac, and her challenging job in education have kept Deborah Pennington beyond any additional contact for some weeks.

When I was in Brisbane in September I had a quick telephone chat with Bishop Ray Benjamin who now lives in Mary Crest Home. In his words, his 'health is good' and he continues to read the Newsletter with interest.

May the Holy Child bless us this Christmas and give us all peace and joyful hope in the coming year.

Sheila Hawthorn

Christchurch earthquake four years on

Mary Woods

It wasn't just land and buildings that were damaged by the earthquakes in Christchurch. Hearts broke, neighbourhoods fell apart, dreams were shattered and we had no comprehension of the slowness of the path ahead to recovery.

An earthquake is not a single event. Since 4th September 2010, geologists have measured over 10,000 quakes in Christchurch and surrounding areas. Three were big and broke buildings and infrastructure and killed 185 people. Another 421 sent you diving for cover and dodging things being thrown off shelves and out of cupboards. The rest raised our internal alarms 'should I go for cover or will it pass in a couple of seconds'? This has kept the people of Christchurch always on the alert as they try to get on with their lives.

After the September 2010 quake our neighbourhood grew closer together. We shared coffee, washing machine and storage space. We watched out for each other checking after any sizeable shake. But the big quake on 22nd February 2011 changed everything. That after-noon our neighbourhood was disintegrating and the people in all the houses surrounding ours were leaving. Their homes were no longer fit to live in. It was a poignant moment when I saw one man loading his ancient MG car on to his son's trailer and his wife carrying her orchid plants - each rescuing their most precious possessions.

As our house was less damaged than others, our lawn became a gathering point for land-line phone, drinking water and what food we could salvage. But by evening our neighbours had gone. Then I realised that without power, water or sewerage, and with floors littered with broken glass and the contents of the fridge and pantry, we could not sleep in our house that night. We went to Les's sister on the less damaged edge of the city.

Two weeks later we had cleaned up the mess inside but we still had no power or water, so we departed for the shelter of our family in Wellington.

We did go back and live in our own broken house. Meantime, God had planted sweet peas in the 'crevasses' in the driveway and they bloomed. But during that year we accepted many invitations of family and friends to live with them or house-sit while they were away. We are most grateful to these people who gave us



a healing space, but by the end of 2011 we knew we had lived as nomads for long enough. We needed to make a decision.

It was becoming obvious that the processes of the Earthquake Commission and the insurance companies were going to take a long time. Over 100,000 houses had been broken. Assessment of the damage to buildings and land was a huge undertaking. We had to decide whether to sit it out and wait for a decision on our house or to take control of our lives.

We decided to leave our home of forty years and the magnificent garden Les had built there and move to the Wellington area where we had lots of supportive family. We were fortunate in that we had more options open to us than many other people had. We are a retired couple who had paid off their mort-gage. We had no job or children holding us in Christ-church and we could afford to take the risk of renting a place for an unknown period. It was another year before we heard from our insurance company that they had deemed our house uneconomic to repair. Our options were that they would buy us a house out of Christchurch or they would rebuild our house on the old site but not before 2015. We chose to move and are now living at Raumati Beach north of Wellington and Les is creating another garden.

It's quite hard to become part of a new community but we are working on it. I have been welcomed by the New Zealand's only L'Arche community, who have asked me to write their history, so I have had the privilege of meeting and interviewing some very special people. However, I do miss my Christchurch friends. The earthquake taught us the importance of knowing our neighbours. They are the ones who will be there for you and you for them in an emergency. A couple of street parties have ensured that we all know each other here. I keep contact with my old Christchurch neighbours. After nearly four years, nobody has been able to rebuild on our part of the

hill and the latest information from the City Council throws doubt on whether anyone ever will.

This whole experience has been very hard on the people of Christchurch. First, there was the trauma of the big quakes themselves and the need to keep going – cleaning up, caring for children, the sick and the elderly, and finding a suitable place to live till some unspecified point in the future. People had jobs to attend to and kept going, while trying to meet their own family's needs. Year three seems to have been a bad year for many of the people who had coped and carried the community through those first two hard years. Living with uncertainty and changing expectations wears people down. In the third year the community's 'copers' were falling apart. It had all been too hard and there was no resolution in sight. Teachers are also noticing mental health issues emerging in children as a result of their quake and aftermath experiences. There is more work to be done.

But creativity emerged from devastation. At the end of 2011, a group of retailers opened shops in brightly coloured shipping containers at the edge of the city business district (CBD). In the debris of knocked down buildings, people have thrown wild flower seeds to brighten the devastated city. Artists have decorated fences round the cordoned-off areas. The spirit of Christchurch rises. Both the city's cathedrals collapsed in the February quake and lie as piles of rubble. The Anglicans have built a cardboard Cathedral as a centre for their community. It is beautiful and has a life expectancy of about ten years. But battles rage between those who want to rebuild the old Cathedral and those who want a modern design. The Catholics have kept quiet about theirs and nothing has been done except to take over another central church as a pro-cathedral. Both approaches have created a thinking space. My own thought is that we cannot rebuild the past, we can only move forward. And the God who planted sweet peas in our broken driveway will not be held captive in a building.

15 October 2014

Visiting Fatima

Helen Jeffcoat

In October 2014, I had the opportunity to attend an International Grail formation program in Golega, Portugal. I had some financial support from the International Grail and the Grail in Australia, for which I am deeply grateful. It was a profoundly moving spiritual experience and one that I hope will continue to shape my daily life and deepen my commitment to the Grail movement. At another opportunity I would be happy to talk more about the program, but for now, this is the story of our visit to Fatima. We had an afternoon 'off' and made a half-day trip together. Fatima is only a 30-minute drive from Golega, so off we set in the municipal bus with Celeste Baptiste at the wheel.

I was a bit apprehensive about visiting such a popular shrine. Would the demands of tourism – parking, shops and conveniences – have overtaken any sacredness that remained at the site? I think the local authorities have done a really good job with presentation. The car park, accommodating many tourist buses, is at a discreet distance and is dotted with plantings and trees. The conveniences are hidden and ample, clean and free. There are, of course, many, many souvenir shops, but they too are at a distance and flanked by small cafes, which are welcome - even in October, mid-autumn, it was hot and dry.

Fatima, where Our Lady appeared to three young children in 1916, is between two small hills with a shallow valley between them. Today, one hill has the 'old' church on it. This is the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary built in 1953. It holds the graves of Francisco and Jacinta Marto and their cousin Lucia de Jesus. Francisco and Jacinta died in 1919 and 1920 when the Spanish influenza swept through Europe at the end of the first world war. Lucia died in 2005. Their graves are scattered with flowers and many small notes containing prayers and requests. The marble floor has large diamond and circle designs in black, white and pink marble. I took many photos of the floor, pavement and tile designs while in Portugal as inspiration for future quilts! On the opposite hill is the 'new' church, the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, opened in 2007. It is very cool and welcoming to pilgrims, seating 8,000, including carefully considered accommodation for

wheelchairs. Behind the altar is a 500m-wide mural of gold tiles depicting Jesus and the apostles. The central element is the apparitions of Fatima. Outside is a 34m-high crucifix.

Many pilgrims can be seen on their knees moving between the two churches. The distance might be 1.5k and it was very hot on the day we were there. They pray as they go for a special blessing from Our Lady. I felt awkward seeing people doing this, just when I was about to hive off to the coffee shop.

In between the two churches is a paved area maybe the size of two football fields used for open-air Masses. In the middle of this space is the 'little chapel', the Chapel of the Apparitions. It is tiny, built in 1919 on the spot where Our Lady appeared to the children. Now it is under cover with an over-roof and seating around it. There are often prayers and lectures held here through the day. Next to this is an area where you can light candles and offer up prayers. As I lit a candle, I noticed some strange wax shapes burning in sheets of flame. Later, at the souvenir shop, I discovered what they were life-sized wax parts of the body, so that if you were praying for healing in a particular part of your body, you could buy the appropriate wax candle to burn. The souvenir shops were, of course, jammed with products, rosary beads, statues of Mary and holy cards predominating. Almost every stall also catered to the secular, selling red, number 7 soccer shirts with the name 'Ronaldo' on them. As our son, Keith, is a keen footballer, I knew that Ronaldo is a Portuguese forward, playing with Real Madrid, captain of the Portuguese national team and currently the highest paid world player. Something for everyone!

On the way home we visited the homes of the little shepherds, tiny stone houses - dark, with thick walls and earth floors- that were inhabited until the 1930's. The area now full of hotels would have been wooded then. When I was at school, the Brigidine nuns



at Holy Family Primary often told us the story of Our Lady's appearing to the three children – Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia – stressing that children too

can be the messengers of the word of God (but maybe just saintly Portuguese children, not the ordinary sort of Aussie child they were teaching).

While at Fatima I noticed people stooping to pick up large seeds lying all over the ground. At first I thought they may be chestnuts, as there were many stalls around selling roasted chestnuts. But no, they were the seeds of the Azinheira tree (*quercus ilex*, a large evergreen oak native to the Mediterranean region), the variety of tree under which Our Lady had appeared. Pilgrims pick up and keep the seeds for luck. I brought one back to Australia. Yes, I did declare it at customs and the officer at Brisbane airport at one o'clock in the morning gave me a very puzzled look as I explained that Mary had appeared under this tree and that I wanted just to keep it, not plant it.

Teresinha Tavares, a Portuguese Grail member in the Golega house, had accompanied us to Fatima. She is now in her 80s and she told us the story of how her father had been living in Golega when the apparitions occurred. There was much talk of it in the countryside and he walked the distance to Fatima to see with his own eyes what was happening, hoping that he too would see Our Lady. Later he told his family of being in the crowd for one of the visions. Only the children could see Mary but the crowd could see and hear the children talking to her. There was white shimmery light around the children and the sun danced in the sky. He, and those in the crowd, were very afraid and utterly convinced that something deeply spiritual was occurring.

We had taken a picnic to share, the best part of which was little cheese turnovers, Celeste Baptiste's specialty. I am glad to have had the opportunity to see the shrine. Whenever I say a Hail Mary now, I will think of Fatima.

National Election Results

We are happy to announce the results of the recent election for three members of the National Team and the National Treasurer.

Mary Robertson was re-elected unopposed for a further term as National Treasurer. We are grateful to Mary for accepting the responsibility for administering our national finances for another four years.

The present National Team – Kay Hunt, Jill Herbert and Mary Nelson – will officially complete their work on 31st December. They can well be proud of what they have achieved.

The new National Team will be Andrea Venier from Melbourne, Tricia Gemmell from Sydney and Ann Aboud from Brisbane. We look forward to the leadership they will bring to the Grail in Australia and assure them of our best cooperation.

We are in a fortunate position to have others, as well as these, able and willing to take up national responsibility. This is so reassuring for the future. THANK YOU ALL.