

The Grail Newsletter

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MAKING PEACE

Denise Levertov

A voice from the dark called out,
'The poets must give us imagination of peace,
to oust the intense, familiar imagination of disaster.
Peace, not only the absence of war.'

But peace, like a poem, is not there ahead of itself,
can't be imagined before it is made,
can't be known except in the words of its making,
grammar of justice, syntax of mutual aid.

A feeling towards it, dimly sensing a rhythm,
is all we have until we begin to utter its metaphors,
learning them as we speak.

A line of peace might appear
if we restructured the sentence our lives are making,
revoked its reaffirmation of profit and power,
questioned our needs, allowed long pauses.

A cadence of peace might balance its weight on that different fulcrum;
peace, a presence, an energy field more intense than war,
might pulse then, stanza by stanza into the world,
each act of living one of its words,
each word a vibration of light—facets of the forming crystal.



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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

North Queensland

During my southern sojourn around Christmas I took the opportunity to go to Melbourne for a week to visit Joanna Waite and Pat Sheeran. As I have a cousin living in the Corpus Christi Village in Clayton I was able to stay quite close to the aged care facility where Pat is a resident. Many thanks to Sr Marie Therese, LCM, for her hospitality which enabled me to visit Pat frequently when we shared a few stories about the Club Hotel in Winton in western Queensland where Pat spent most of her young life and about people we both knew in Mackay. In one conversation about the Grail, she commented, 'The Grail certainly attracted some strong women'. Andrea and I also enjoyed a very pleasant visit with Joanna at the Eva Tilley Memorial Home. Again the conversation ranged widely over many topics and Andrea and Joanna shared stories of the new babies who had recently arrived in their families. My thanks also to the Melbourne Grail women who arranged opportunities for us to meet for luncheon at Madeleine's café, dinner at a Thai restaurant and supper at Andrea's home.

Since I returned to Townsville at the end of January it has been a real challenge to 'get up' never mind 'and go', with temperatures up to 40 degrees and the extreme humidity of a tropical wet season without the wet. So life here has been moving along somewhat slowly, except for the Townsville Little Theatre. Apart from being well into production of *Calendar Girls*, the group has launched its 2016 program, raised several hundred dollars at two sausage sizzles, completed auditions for its season of short plays and staffed a promotional stall at the regular Sunday Cotter's Market in the Townsville city business district.

I participated in a Scripture-based program on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, appropriate to the Lenten season and also the Jubilee Year of Mercy. As practical applications of the program, donations were asked and given to local projects, such as a facility in Mount Isa where more than 80 people are fed regularly, the provision by Ozanam House of a large number of Bibles, rosary beads and magazines for seafarers who find themselves in Townsville and reading material, children's colouring books and pencils and toiletries for refugee families.

In January I was very pleasantly surprised to discover that Sr Angie RSM from Papua New Guinea was in Townsville. Angie is a relative of Elizabeth Waken from the beautiful island of Kairiru. She and I shared many memories of their school days decades ago when I was teaching at the Holy Rosary school in Wewak. Elizabeth and Angie are outstanding examples of the large number of deeply committed, strongly ethical and highly professional women working in health, education, social welfare, women's issues and concerns and community development in Papua New Guinea. It is humbling to hear many of them express their pride in being ex-students of Holy Rosary and/or Mercy College, Yrapos, which is also in the Wewak area.

There are two women presently pursuing here a program of induction into the Grail. One, Consy (Consolata) Sakaria, will make her commitment in the Grail at the National Grail Retreat (see Sydney news below). Consy was born in Tokelau, which consists of three coral atolls in the Pacific. As a child she moved with her family to New Zealand. After she left school, her parents insisted that she return to Tokelau to strengthen her Polynesian cultural roots. As an adult she migrated to Australia. Consy is married to a Tokelau man; they have two children. She has a degree in social work from James Cook University and is the Townsville trauma counsellor in the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), who are mostly refugees, settled in this part of the world. I met Consy when she came for a work placement to the Multicultural Support Group.

A long-time good friend, Bishop Ray Benjamin, died on 18th March in Brisbane. Originally from the Rockhampton Diocese, in which the Grail Centre in Mackay was located, he was appointed Bishop of Townsville and so became a friend of the Grail members there also. He was much admired and respected among the churches and the wider community. With very few priests in the Townsville diocese to minister to the Catholic community scattered over such an extensive territory, he developed strong ecumenical relations and cooperative planning among the Christian churches to ensure that Christians would have access to at least one Christian service of worship every Sunday, encouraging them to worship and pray together. He played an active part in the organisation of 'Churches Together in Queensland'. He appointed Roberta Michna, Grail member and former Principal of St

Raphael's, as his representative on the State Council of this body. A farsighted leader committed to the ideals and values of Vatican II, he was also a warm-hearted human being and lover of the arts. James Cook University bestowed on him the honorary title of Professor Emeritus (Arts) at the same time as he became Emeritus Bishop of Townsville. We will always honour his memory.

Thankfully, March produced heavy downpours of rain, storms and showers which we hope have raised the level of the local dam a good deal higher than the 21% it had declined to. In the last 48 hours the water level has certainly risen around my house but not enough, I think, to keep me housebound. In the monsoon season, however, one never knows!

May we all be re-energised by the new life of Easter and always be people of joy and peace.

Sheila Hawthorn

Brisbane

It's hard to believe that by the time this newsletter reaches you, Lent is in the past and the Easter season well advanced. Easter coming so early this year took us all by surprise. Everywhere this sub-tropical city is lush and green, thanks to the late summer and early autumn rain.

The latter half of 2015 was very sad for our Brisbane group as we said our final goodbyes to treasured family, Grail members and associates. I'd like to mention especially Gloria Lazzarini and Nicholas Ruygrock.

We wrote about Gloria in the September newsletter last year around the time of her death. We are missing her presence, cheerfulness, warm hospitality and wit. Nicholas was a young man just 25 years of age, Mary Nelson's nephew, and recently engaged to Verity, who tragically lost his life in a traffic accident just 12 months after his father's sudden death. He had been such a support for his family during that time.

Many of us were travelling and catching up with family during the latter days of 2015 and in January. Jan O'Donoghue was able to celebrate her sister's golden jubilee in January and stay with the sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Kensington. Ann Aboud attended a multi-faith conference in

Turkey towards the end of 2015. Always busy, she has now nearly completed a Logotherapy course which will help in her pastoral care work at the Princess Alexandra hospital. This therapy was developed by Dr Victor Frankl, author of the famous *Man's search for meaning* (1946), who believed people were motivated by a search for meaning. She also attended the Mass to celebrate 100 years since the founding of Lourdes Hill College at Hawthorn. A commemorative book, *Shine - the story and spirit of LHC 1916-2016*, tells the story.

A number of people, including members of our Brisbane group, are working on the history of The Grail in Mackay to capture its impact on the Mackay region and in the lives of those who lived at *Ballybrac*, the Grail Centre there 1956-1984.

'Days For Girls' is inspiring people, still, with its way of supporting girls and women in developing countries. Jill Herbert has been our very active link with this organisation.

Helen Jeffcoat and her daughters, Ailsa and Olwen Paterson, were in St Peter's Square in Rome on the 8th December, the feast of Mary Immaculate, to watch the Pope open the Holy Door signifying the commencement of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Elizabeth Lancaster participated in the Lenten pilgrimage in the Brisbane Southside Deanery for this Year of Mercy. It was inspirational.

Some of us are booked to join members from other States at St Benedict's Conference Centre in Sydney for a national Grail retreat.

The Pope reminds us, 'We cannot pretend all is fine'. During this precious season of Easter let us pray for the resolve to move beyond our comfort zone and respond to the cries of our ravaged world with courage and compassion.

Many blessings to all.

Elizabeth Lancaster for the Brisbane Grail

Sydney

A number of us were invited by Lauren Porter and her parents to Lauren's wedding to Mark Lockwood in the Friends' Meeting House in Devonshire

Street, Surry Hills on 13th February. Lauren had lived at 'Avila' for two years while she completed her Masters in Counselling and is interested in becoming a Grail member. None of us had been to a Quaker wedding before. Mark arrived in December from England after a long wait for his visa. His parents made their first trip to Australia for the wedding.

The simple ceremony of the exchange of vows and the signing of the register was preceded and followed by silence, punctuated only when a person present felt moved by the Spirit to say, or sing, something. We sat in concentric circles and, each in her/his own way, contemplated the significant event occurring among us. A spirit of serenity pervaded the room. Quite unlike what followed, when we climbed aboard a double-decker bus which was to take us to the restaurant in nearby Riley Street. It seems the driver had an old street directory which he said showed a permanent obstruction halfway up Riley Street that would necessitate his detouring around it. So we swung off Riley Street and as we sped and swayed down the narrow tree-lined side streets, the top of the bus sheared off the leaves of overhanging branches. We turned again and beheld the Friends' Meeting House. The driver tried and tried again and we revisited the trees and the Meeting House four times in all. Lauren's father was pleading with him to stay on Riley Street and finally prevailed. We were at our destination in moments, filled with laughter. Our leisurely Italian meal and the speeches and toasts were memorable and moving. A day of joy.

The Book Club was the first group to meet in 2016 after the summer break. We have chosen our books for months ahead. In April we are discussing *Eye of the Sheep* by Sofia Laguna, a remarkable piece of imaginative writing, about a family in Altona, Victoria, perceived through the eyes of the younger child. In May, we return to Elizabeth Harrower to read *The Long Prospect*.

Lent was upon us quickly and Tricia Gemmell offered some reflection and discussion on a few women mystics on the Saturday mornings of Lent. This program was additional to the longstanding *Food for the Soul* on Wednesday nights and the bi-monthly Tuesday morning meditation. From 7.30 to 9 pm on Wednesdays we are contemplating the Gospel of John. The Tuesday morning program is focussing on texts about God and creation. As well, a

monthly study group is working through *Ask the Beasts* by Elizabeth Johnson.

Anne Stevens, Mary McDearmid and Alison Healey have resumed their regular Thursday morning organising the Grail archive. While the work never really ends, they are beginning to feel some sense of major achievement and are concocting a ‘history party’ to celebrate later in the year.

Towards the end of March, we took our Personal Journal for prisoners in the State’s correctional centres to the Rose Bay – Dover Heights parish, speaking briefly about the project at the four Masses that weekend. Tony Doherty, the parish priest and a long-time friend, could not have supported us more and the people responded warmly and generously. We will be doing the same in Lindfield-Killara parish next month. These parish visits not only fund the project with sales of the journal but raise awareness of the needs of prisoners and their families and encourage a mindset of care. We invite again any readers of the newsletter interested in helping this project to contact the Sydney Centre.

Helen Gomez is busy almost every week of the year welcoming and caring for a variety of groups who base their activities and meetings in the Grail Centre. There are several spirituality groups who come on weekday evenings or weekends and have been doing so for many years. Joyce Kornblatt’s creative writing group has been meeting monthly all day Saturday with great benefit to the participants, also for several years. This year, Stephanie Dowrick is also leading a writers’ group regularly on a weeknight. In March, Ruth Crowe and Norma Tracey organised an event to mark National ‘Close the Gap’ Day, focussed particularly on the subject of aboriginal health care. Norma is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and founding director of *Gunawirra*, a project with aboriginal mothers and children, particularly supporting aboriginal preschools around the State. She organised a session at the Centre for the workers in these preschools who are daily dealing with trauma in these small children. Marilyn Charles, President of USA Psychoanalytic Association, was invited as a resource person to *Gunawirra* and she led this session. It was a pleasure to have Marilyn stay with us for those days.

The St Benedict's Conference Centre at Pennant Hills was the venue for a National Grail Retreat in April attended by women from the three eastern States, a too rare opportunity for strengthening friendships which normally must be sustained by distance communication. The National Team chose two themes for us to contemplate: Australian Grail history and creation spirituality. A highlight of the three days was the commitment of Consy Sakaria from North Queensland, (see Townsville news above). Consy flew down a day earlier and she, Sheila and Alison prepared the ritual together. Before the actual affirmation of commitment, she told something of her personal story which led to this moment and then sang a traditional Tokelauan chant signifying the importance of what was to follow. Finally, she chanted again, this time in thanksgiving, a sentiment we all felt strongly. We are blessed to have Consy among us.

Consy has joined us and Marie Carey (1917–2016) has left us after a lifetime of faithful participation in the Grail movement. Marie and her husband, Les, had five children. She was a woman of strong faith, an adventurous spirit with a keen sense of social justice.

Before her health prevented her from continuing, Marie was an active member of the Women's Group convened by Moya Merrick promoting the role of women in the church. While her formal education ended when she was 16 years old, she was a lifelong learner, an avid reader. In 1983, she and Catherine Bagley wrote the radio script for a national ABC program on English writer and mystic, Caryll Houselander, and her relationship with Sidney Reilly, the subject of a television series, *Reilly Ace of Spies*, showing here at the time. Marie was farewelled from the chapel of Our Lady of Consolation Home in Rooty Hill by three generations of her loving family, friends including Sydney Grail members and fellow residents and staff.

We were saddened by the news of the death in December last of Bridgette Brasier, a country girl from NSW and former resident in 'Tay Creggan', Melbourne, a quiet, gentle soul we miss.

The Sydney group

Melbourne

It has been quite a busy summer in Melbourne either side of the holiday

break, with Christmas celebrations beforehand and special events in February, the highlight being Pat Sheeran's 90th birthday party. Throughout this period we also welcomed a number of interstate visitors.

Our very hot, spring weather gave way to a milder, though warm, summer but we are still getting over 30 degree days as autumn approaches!

Anne Marie George spent a few days here catching up with friends before New Year and we spent a morning in Oakleigh, which is now the Greek epicentre of Melbourne. Sheila arrived a week later, staying with her cousin Marie, visiting Pat and Joanna, and socialising with Dinny Culican, Genny Grabau, Ann Niall and Andrea Venier.

A few days before Christmas, our *lectio divina* group gathered with Joanna Waite at the Eva Tilley Centre for a reflection and celebration. Some of us also spent time with Pat in the days leading up to Christmas. There were many joyous family events over this time despite illness and medical treatments for a number of members.

For Pat's special birthday (22nd February), we held an afternoon tea in the Bar/Lounge at the Corpus Christi residence on Sunday 21st, which was attended by twenty-seven local and interstate friends. It was wonderful to welcome Rita Corby and her daughter Margaret Anne from Mackay, Daphne Tithe and husband John from Bundaberg, from Sydney Alison Healey and Helen Macauley, who came with her daughter Amy (a Melbourne resident) and many Melbourne members and other long-standing friends of Pat's. We read a poem and listened to some testimonials in Pat's honour. Pat's favourite colour blue was the theme colour for the afternoon in clothing, table settings and even the cake! Pat certainly enjoyed the company that afternoon and the many visitors who popped in during the week. Thanks to Genny, we have photos of the occasion to distribute and collect in an album for Pat which Irena and the *lectio* group helped to put together.

Alison stayed on in Melbourne to share some time with us and to lead a conversation on the theme, *Out of Empire*, on Saturday, 27th February at the Kildara Centre. The participants responded readily to her material, which was a most appropriate reflection on our society during Lent. We very much appreciate Alison's efforts in helping to inform and inspire the group.

On 7th February, Angela Ridsdale died. Those familiar with the adult education program at 'Tay Creggan' through the 1970s will remember her – a brilliant educationist, described by one of her former students at Toorak Teachers' College as 'creative, dynamic, reflective and inclusive'. Her friends knew her also to be extraordinarily kind. She is now in the embrace of the God to whom she was so faithful.

We recommenced our *lectio divina* group in February using *Being Lost, Being Found* (a production of the Brisbane diocese) as our resource for the Lenten season. Irena and Kevin Dunne continue to host our thought-provoking gatherings. We were pleased that Alison could join us.

Carol Webb arrived back in Melbourne in mid-February planning to stay until mid-April when she would return to the USA. Fortunately, the National Retreat fell within this period and Carol could join us for that. It's always a great pleasure to see her and we wish peace and blessing on her and her mother whom she is caring for at this time.

After a pre-Easter gathering, four of us from Victoria will attend the National Retreat in Sydney. There will be a follow-up day in Melbourne, and we plan a repeat of last year's successful activity for women with cancer.

As this goes to print, Kevin Dunne has finally been given the go-ahead for a skin graft on his arm. We are praying for a successful outcome to this long and torturous illness, and our prayers are also with Dinny who received the sad news of the death of her dear sister-in-law, Mary, in Canada. Good news are the completed radiation treatments of Andrea's mother and sister, and Dawn McGann's improved health. Let's hope for good days ahead!

Many blessings on all our readers over the Easter season.

Andrea Venier

On The Move In The Pacific: The Carteret Islanders

On 12 April, Sheila Hawthorn and I accepted an invitation from Caritas and Friends of the Earth to an illustrated talk by Ursula Rakova, director of *Tulele Peisa*, which is the relocation program of Carteret Islanders to Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

Ursula, with her words and her slides, gave a moving presentation of the devastation of the islands by the rising seas and storms resulting from climate change. One of the slides showed us an island cut in two by the invading ocean, the gap between the two parts ever widening. It was a shocking sight. There were other painful pictures of utterly destroyed houses and gardens, of once productive soil saturated with salt, of tall, mature palm trees completely under-mined and fallen into the ocean. One could see on the faces of the people their grief and trauma in leaving their traditional lands and customs forever. There is some congruence between their culture and that of the Bougainville people and part of the purpose of *Tulele Peisa* is to help their cultural adaptation as well as their practical settlement.

Kiribati and Tuvalu are similarly under severe pressure from the surrounding seas and storms; their populations are much bigger than the population of the Carteret islands and they do not have alternative land to move to. Tulele Peisa is funded entirely by Christian church grants, mostly from Germany. Ursula calls for a greater response from Australia to the effects of climate change on its small and vulnerable neighbours in the Pacific and urges that the resources of the Green Fund be freed up from bureaucratic red tape and be more readily available to local initiatives responding to these crises. There is also the issue of compensating peoples who are losing every-thing, including their cultural heritage, because of the way others are living.

Alison Healey



In Memory Of Elizabeth Samen Saulep Waken

Elizabeth was one of the founding members of the Grail in Papua New Guinea. Her death on 14th January of this year was a profound sorrow for her loving husband and family. The Grail and the many, many people who knew her kindness, her service particularly for the suffering and needy, her generosity and her decisive leadership also suffer a great loss. Elizabeth was from Kairiru Island off the northern coast of PNG near Wewak, East Sepik Province. Sheila Hawthorn was Teacher in Charge of the Holy Rosary Girls' School in Wewak when Elizabeth, having begun school in her village on the island, arrived to complete her primary education. Sheila described her then as 'infectiously cheerful, always ready to lend a helping hand whenever needed, with a deep Christian faith and impressive scholastic ability'. She went on to High School but, declaring she didn't 'want to be a grandmother in school', took the first opportunity to leave and pursue training in general nursing and midwifery at the Mater Hospital, Mackay, Queensland. Here she made contact with other Grail members. Steadily, her commitment in the Grail developed and became the underpinning and inspiration of the next 40 years of her life.

By the time Elizabeth returned to PNG in 1976, two Pacific Summer Schools for young people of the South Pacific had taken place in Fiji and Sydney and a third was scheduled for January 1977 in Port Moresby. A strong contingent of young women and men from PNG came to all the Summer Schools through the 1970s. These were the impetus for the development of the Papua New Guinean Grail. Elizabeth attended the Moresby program, then left for Kunjingini in the East Sepik to join a team providing medical and social assistance to people in remote areas. The following year she married Gabriel Waken in Wewak.

The home Elizabeth and Gabriel created with nine children in Port Moresby was a blessed place of Christian faith, prayer and loving kindness. Both were working professionally and yet, with all their responsibilities, always had time for whoever came to their door. Many Grail women from Australia and other countries will never forget the warm-hearted hospitality they received. For Grail women and friends travelling from other parts of the country the Wakens' became a transit house. Local, national and international meetings, prayerful celebrations and social gatherings took

place there. Port Moresby Grail files were stored there. Elizabeth's dream of a Grail Centre in Moresby was not realised in her lifetime despite her efforts.

Elizabeth gave remarkable leadership in the Port Moresby General Hospital where, for many years she was in charge of a ward for patients with AIDS and TB. She advocated tirelessly for their needs and organised volunteers to provide what was lacking from the hospital administration. This included daily midday meals, pastoral visits, shrouds and burial arrangements for those who died – and there were many.

Elizabeth gave her talents and energy to building the Grail movement locally and nationally. For three months in 1995, she with Paula Paimé attended an international program of ongoing formation at the Grail Centre in Cornwall, New York State. She managed the national finances of the PNG Grail for several years and played an important role in setting up National Structures to secure the civil status of the Grail in her country.

After a Requiem Mass in the Boroko parish church in Moresby on 21st January, which was attended by a huge congregation and where Rose Maule spoke a tribute to Elizabeth in the name of the Grail, Elizabeth's body was flown back to Wewak on 22nd, where she was met by the Grail women there and taken to the Grail House. The casket was placed on the floor of the main room and a ritual of mourning, Scripture reading, silence, prayer, poetry, song, words of farewell and thanksgiving and the laying of flowers took place. Elizabeth was then carried to the beach and taken by boat to Kairiru for burial - 50 years almost to the day since leaving there to come to school on the mainland.

Those she left still here on earth speak of her: 'She lived simply. She was gentle, respectful and loving. We will remember how she inspired us with her commitment to the Grail movement in PNG and the world. She did everything with prayer'.

This memorial of Elizabeth was compiled from many sources, here gratefully acknowledged: Gabriel Waken, Philma Seato, Crescentia Lementi, the women of the Wewak Grail, Sabina Ewwa, Paula Paimé and Sheila Hawthorn