

The Grail Newsletter

The Grail
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*From Address of John Paul II
to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
Alice Springs (Australia), 29 November 1986*

At the beginning of time, as God's Spirit moved over the waters, he began to communicate something of his goodness and beauty to all creation... And to all human beings throughout the ages God has given a desire for himself, a desire which different cultures have tried to express in their own ways...

For thousands of years you have lived in this land and fashioned a culture that endures to this day. And during all this time, the Spirit of God has been with you. Your Dreaming, which influences your lives so strongly that, no matter what happens, you remain for ever people of your culture, is your way of touching the mystery of God's Spirit in you and in creation...

You lived your lives in spiritual closeness to the land, with its animals, birds, fishes, waterholes, rivers, hills and mountains. Through your closeness to the land you touched the sacredness of man's relationship with God...

The silence of the Bush taught you a quietness of soul that put you in touch with another world, the world of God's Spirit. Your careful attention to the details of kinship spoke of your reverence for birth, life and human generation... Some of the stories from your Dreamtime legends speak powerfully of the great mysteries of human life, its frailty, its need for help, its closeness to spiritual powers and the value of the human person. They are not unlike some of the great inspired lessons from the people among whom Jesus was born.



Commemorating the 30th anniversary of this powerful event.



This painting, The Madonna by Aboriginal artist, Richard Campbell, hangs in the Reconciliation Church at La Perouse, Sydney.

The hands forming the background express the eternal message of God as a constant Presence.

The large circle connecting to the small circle represents the Holy Spirit constantly communicating with us, and also the connection of heaven to earth.

The two small circles connected in the centre represent the action of the Spirit and the Madonna's response, bringing forth the birth of Christ.

No expression on the figures means that there is no doubt or judgment. The Madonna's cradled arms represent the vessel of life, nurturing all in God's love.

The aura symbolises the Mimi Spirits: our past Elders revealing themselves to us to remind us of their wisdom still present.

(Sourced from www.aboriginalcm.cathcomm.org/aboriginalCM/LaPerouse)

We are indebted to Mary Anne Baillie (Mackay, Queensland), who suggested this commemoration of John Paul II's Address in Alice Springs. Mary Anne wrote an article for her parish in which she quotes from the Address and connects them with themes of Advent. Thank you, Mary Anne.

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Addresses

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News from here and there

Melbourne

It has been a wild Spring in Melbourne, with few sunny days and little warmth. The hay fever season has been dreadful for many. At last, whilst writing this report, the sun is peeking through. Bring on Summer!

At the Regional Meeting in August and subsequent planning meetings with the lectio divina group in August and September we prepared an event for November, where we combined the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Grail in Australia with the second Ann Woodruff Lecture. As well, Lauren and Mark reported on their settling in at 'Hesed' and on the many improvements they have been undertaking, including updating the computer system and internet access. A session on accessing the Australian Grail website had to be postponed when the website was 'down', but Mark kindly rescheduled it to a fortnight later.

Our weekly lectio divina continued through November as we reflected on the Beatitudes from Prayers of the Cosmos and a couple of other texts related to our Grail heritage to coincide with the 80th celebrations. We will take our final pre-Christmas reflection and celebration to Eva Tilley Retirement Centre to be with Joanna Waite.

The first half of October saw Andrea overseas joining Kay Hunt and Tricia Gemmell at the Formator's program in Golegá, Portugal. Thanks to Kay, Marijke de Koning and Elsa Coutinho from Portugal, and Maria Carlos Ramos and Marian Schwab from the International Leadership Team, it was well organised and thoughtfully executed as regards both skills and content for the formation of women in the Grail. Tricia and other participants contributed beautiful reflections in the mornings and evenings, allowing the group to feel a strong spiritual connection. It was also a wonderful chance for Andrea to spend a few days with Bé Marujo, who had worked with us on the Yarraville project in the 1980s, and to renew friendships with the Golegá women with whom Andrea had lived and worked in 1987. It was a blessing to experience their joyful hospitality and to share in their organic, home-grown produce.

Other travellers in recent months include Dinny Culican Ward who visited the Northern Territory and stopped off in Brisbane on the way home to attend the Ballybrac lunch; Ann Niall, who, not long returned from Canada, made a dash to England to support her housemate in the loss of her mother; and Kathy and Darryl Wayland who spent a lovely few weeks in Spain to celebrate Kathy's significant birthday.

Still feeling the loss of Dawn McGann, the Melbourne group was saddened by Rosemary Wilson's death at the end of October after several years' suffering with Alzheimer's. Her five children arranged a deeply personal funeral service at the chapel in Monsalvat. Tributes took the form of prose and poetry readings, music and song, and the coffin was strewn with native flowers to reflect Rosemary's love of the natural environment. Kevin Dunn contributed to the eulogy. He and Irena, Kevin and Alice Ley (Rosemary's cousin) and Joan Ryan were all long-time friends of Rosemary in one of the Teams of Our Lady in Melbourne. It was lovely to be able to speak with Julianna Griffith, Rosemary's sister, who has also been suffering from Alzheimer's over recent years.

On Sunday, 6th November, we celebrated the 80th anniversary with the Ann Woodruff Memorial lecture, followed by a champagne afternoon tea and dinner at a local Italian restaurant. There were Grail members and friends of many years' standing, including Daphne Tighe and Alison Healey from interstate, as well as new faces. The Kildara Centre was again our venue, thanks to the support of the Brigidine community.

After an introduction and welcome by Andrea Venier, Kathy Wayland read a prayer of Dr Lydwine van Kersbergen, Dinny Culican Ward gave a tribute to Ann, Genny Grabau introduced our guest speaker, Dr Joanna Flynn AM, and afterwards, Lauren Lockwood-Porter expressed our thanks. Kevin Dunn had welcomed guests at the door.

Joanna Flynn is a highly respected medical practitioner, administrator and educator. We are most grateful that Jo accepted to deliver the address, being, like Ann, an outstanding health professional and an advocate for the development of women, not to mention a longstanding Grail member. Joanna gave an insightful and entertaining presentation, with much food for

thought, on the topic 'Ethics and Equity in Healthcare'. Many interesting questions precipitated a lively discussion.

During the delicious champagne afternoon tea, managed by Ann Niall assisted with the help of other members, Alison proposed a toast to the Grail in Australia, noting that, despite Fr van Ginneken's hopeful assertions, the Grail is far from having fulfilled its purpose after eighty years!

Our end-of-year Eucharist held a special significance this year as we affirmed two new members – Kathy Wayland and Lauren Lockwood-Porter. Kathy and Lauren have participated in formation over the years and were able to 'fill in the gaps' at some recent sessions together. Kathy has frequently attended Grail events and programs including the National Retreat in Sydney in April and contributed to our Melbourne Retreat in July. She has a deep interest in spirituality, is an accomplished educator, wife to Darryl, mother of four boys and grandmother, and long-time friend and colleague of Andrea. Lauren spent two years at 'Avila' in Sydney whilst studying and works in pastoral care and counselling. She and her husband, Mark, are residing at 'Hesed'. They are deeply committed to the spirituality of the Society of Friends. Lauren also convenes the Melbourne Pace Bene group. We discovered that the evening was also significant for our celebrant, Fr Michael Mason C.S.S.R., as it marked his fiftieth year in the priesthood.

There were twenty-five members and partners present for a moving Advent liturgy, which incorporated readings and prayers of particular significance for the Grail, as well as the commitment statements made by Kathy and Lauren and responded to by the group. Our thoughts were with Pat Sheeran and Joanna who could not be with us and we remembered, in particular, Dawn McGann and Pat Fogarty whose husbands Paul and Brian joined us for the evening. We were also very happy to welcome Ruth Crowe from Sydney, who spent a few days catching up with Lauren and Mark and other friends. As usual, the hospitality of June and Laurie Ryan was wonderful and we especially thank their daughter, Edwina, for all her assistance. It was an uplifting end to the year!

The group was thrilled to see the design June (assisted by her daughter and granddaughter) has made for some Grail greeting cards. We hope to produce them in the new year.

Finally, we bring you news of the death in December of Carol Farmer's partner, Dieter, after a long illness with cancer. Carol and daughter, Stefanie, and son, Sean Michael, created beautiful rituals of farewell and a warm, loving celebration of Dieter's life with their family members and friends, some of whom came from as far as Western Australia.

From the excellent *Prayers of the Cosmos*:

*'In peace the Name resides: a room of one's own,
a holy of holies, open, giving light, to all'.*

A peaceful and joyful Christmas to you all!

Andrea Venier

Sydney

As we move towards the end of the year, our thoughts inevitably turn to planning for 2017 and several planning meetings are scheduled before Christmas. (A favourite Jewish saying comes to mind: 'If you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans'.)

Already fixed in the calendar are a series of talks prepared by Tricia Gemmell for a summer study program organised by the Grail in Portugal this year, which she will repeat on consecutive Saturdays in Lent. They take up the theme of *ecological conversion*, to which Pope Francis has called the world in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Tricia will also continue the bi-monthly Tuesday morning spirituality program. This year, it will be based on Kathleen Dowling Singh's book, *The Grace in Dying*. The author sees a clear correlation between the inner journey of the process of dying and the spiritual journey we are all called to. The other areas of action identified for 2017 await more detailed notification in the New Year. We will, of course, maintain our long-term involvements in promoting justice and peace and interfaith collaboration.

The Book Club held its usual pre-Christmas gathering at the end of November, when, instead of discussing a chosen book, we each bring a short reading or poem to share during our meal together. This year we celebrated our tenth year of reading and monthly conversations about books. It was a lovely summer evening; we sat on the front verandah of Carol and Jack Flanagan's home delighting in their flourishing garden and one another's company. We felt grateful and blessed and now look forward to what next year will bring. There will be some changes, as two of the group will be living out of Sydney, one on the central coast, the other to the south.

Our regular *lectio divina* every Wednesday evening, 7.30 – 9 pm, has been devoted for many weeks to the Gospel of John. It has been deeply nourishing to make our way slowly through such a beautiful and challenging text. We still have the last chapters to complete in 2017.

Two networks in which we are active have held their final meetings for the year and look forward to a busy schedule of commitments in the new year. After the last AFTINET (Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network) meeting, network members gathered at a nearby pub for drinks and nibbles and toasted the year of productive campaigning against unjust provisions in trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). While this agreement will now certainly not go forward since the USA will not be ratifying it, there are forces at work aiming to include its unjust provisions in new agreements being negotiated. These will be next year's agenda. The multifaith FEN (Faith Ecology Network), after a splendid formative program at the end of September at the Randwick wetlands, will launch a new year of action with an Enrichment and Planning weekend in Bathurst on 18-19th February.

We celebrated the Grail's 80th year in Australia on 30th October with a day out together in Brooklyn on the Hawkesbury River. The drive north was very pleasant, as was also the fresh fish and seafood lunch at the Anglers Arms hotel. Kay Hunt and Tricia Gemmell had not long returned from Portugal and we enjoyed the leisure of an extended conversation about their experiences there.

On Universal Peace Day in September, Sheila Hawthorn and Claire Clear represented us at the multifaith Peace Prayer Service at the Parramatta

Uniting Church Mission Centre. The heartfelt prayers and songs expressed deep longing for a non-violent world. In November, some of us were among the 2000 people who gathered in the Sydney Town Hall for the presentation of the annual Sydney Peace Prize to Naomi Klein, influential journalist, activist and author of several books. She inspired her audience with her strong belief that a just and peaceful and ecologically balanced world is possible; the change required calls for our steadfast commitment to contributing as much as we can.

Margaret Tranter and Andrew Wood from the Atherton Tableland, North Queensland, were welcome visitors to 'Avila' recently. They were in Sydney to attend yet another wedding; they had been to one in Colombia earlier in the year and, we understand, also went to another in Perth in October. When back in Millaa Millaa, they continue their dedicated planting of hundreds of native trees in their local environment.

Helen Gomez spent three weeks in October in Singapore and Malaysia visiting her family members, especially two of her sisters who are both suffering ill health. While she knows they receive good and loving care, she was glad to be able to be with them and offer her care to them while she was there. And they, of course, appreciated her presence.

Many years ago, Mary Gindhart (USA) and Rachel Donders (Netherlands) together compiled a brief account of the history of the Grail in all the countries where it had taken root. Last year, Mary wrote announcing that she wanted to update the earlier volume and asked for a summary history of the Grail from each country covering the years 1981-2016. It was to be no more than around 4000 words. Gloria Lazzarini began some research, but her illness prevented her moving forward with it and the task fell to Alison Healey. While Mary's request was a challenge – how to be appropriately comprehensive and very succinct -- it also turned out to be a gift. Now that it's done, some helpful insights have emerged out of all the distilling and reflection that may be guides to future directions.

In the September newsletter we wrote of the illness of Ann Miranda. Heart surgery succeeded in giving her and her husband, Dave, some extra weeks together, she seemed to regain a little strength, but quite suddenly suffered cardiac arrest and died in early December. We will miss her warm, vibrant

presence among us. The church community in Redfern, to which Ann and Dave belonged for many years, deeply mourn her going. May the Spirit bring Dave strength and healing and peace of heart.

In late November, Mary McDearmid and her sister, Sarah, arranged a memorial Eucharist at the Grail Centre, in honour of their mother, Isabel. With Rev. Daven Day SJ, Isabel's family and friends gathered in peaceful prayer and song, giving thanks for her good life among us.

Wishing a blessed Christmas and New Year to all,

Sheila Hawthorn and Alison Healey

Brisbane

The first week of summer has hit southeast Queensland, including Brisbane, with tropical storms, amazing light shows, hail and sultry days and nights. People are flocking to the beaches and shopping centres as schools close for the summer holidays and families prepare for their Christmas celebrations. This all sounds very familiar and should not come as a surprise. But while we become tied up in our busyness we should not forget those here in Australia and other places who are suffering. May the Christ Child touch their lives with some joy and peace.

The most buoyant time for a number of us was our annual retreat in the foothills of Mt Barney, in the Scenic Rim, in November. Janet Galos' brother has built a country home and studio there that is very friendly to the environment. Being in the Australian bush with friends, a wonderful retreat program, put together by Jan O' Donoghue and Janet Galos, of prayer, ritual, prepared presentations and reflection, was a rejuvenating experience for all of us. It was so nice that Sue George, a professional artist, was able to join us for part of the time and provide encouragement for the artistic elements of the program, as well as being so welcoming to her domain.

Ann Aboud was fortunate enough to have been able to travel to Ethiopia with Margaret Hounslow just before the retreat and to deliver a suitcase full of kits made by Brisbane women for the *Days for Girls* project and see the work being done there. This organisation that strongly supports the education of women has NGO status and has now applied to be a registered

charity in Australia. Ann was able to show us some Ethiopian children's books, fabric and religious items that she brought back.

Travelling also has been Mary Mennis, an historian who has documented much of the work of the missions in PNG. Her latest book, *Rempi to Rebiamul - Missions from Madang to Mt Hagen 1896 to 2016*, has just been released and has already sold 500 copies to the Mt Hagen mission through Archbishop Douglas Young.

The annual reunion lunch of ex-residents of 'Ballybrac', the former Mackay Grail Centre, went ahead at the end of October. It was good to have Dinny Culican Ward from Melbourne present and Mary Vella, who joined the group for the first time. This gathering, which has been happening for many years, is organised by Bernadette (Canfell) McLay and all who have lived in 'Ballybrac' over the years are always very welcome to come.

Mary Nelson led a live-in weekend on Creative Spirituality with Betsy Beckman from the USA. This was a prelude to a program for women next year. A number of us have attended significant programs recently with visiting speakers. Sean McDonagh, Irish Columban priest, was in Brisbane on an Australian lecture tour to urge us to a deeper ecological spirituality and to live in harmony with the Earth. Some may remember his book, *To care for the earth: a call to a new theology*, written already thirty years ago in 1986 (!). There are good resources online that we think are worth noting, e.g. the website of the Global Catholic Climate Movement; also the programs of the ABC Religion and Ethics Department.

Other news from our members:

The Social Justice Group in Mackay are giving their attention to the Report, *At What Cost*, published under the auspices of Save the Children and UNICEF, which examines the human, economic and strategic costs of the Australian Government's policies regarding refugees and asylum seekers and offers alternatives.

Numbers of Syrian and Iraqi Christian families have settled on the north side of Brisbane. Many are now attending Bracken Ridge Technical and Further Education (TAFE) College.

Jenny Mitchell's eye surgery has been successful.

Maggie Jenatsch has a new grandson.

Chris Vidler, Jill and Pat's youngest child, has completed Year 12 and is hoping to study agribusiness.

Ailsa Patterson, Helen Jeffcoat and Brian's daughter, has obtained her first teaching job and will be teaching Year 3 at Emmanuel College in Mackay next year.

May the joy and blessings of the Christmas season be with you and your families.

The Brisbane Group

North Queensland

My October diary included attending the Valedictory Dinner at Saints College, James Cook University (JCU). This is always a very special occasion, when the College celebrates what the College community has achieved in that year: the students' academic and professional successes, their participation in the broad sweep of university life, their services to others, their personal growth in spirit and faith and integrity. Every year, at this celebration, The Grail gives a sign of its continuing interest in the women residents in the College. A Grail member in Townsville attends the dinner and presents an award to a student chosen by the College leadership for her remarkable contribution to the life of the College.

The 2016 recipient is Pharmacy graduate, Lyndel McGinty from Wodonga, Victoria. Lyndel was described as 'a valued and worthy woman of this College, trustworthy and diligent, friendly to everyone, a quiet achiever, devout and faithful, an excellent role model, an excellent advocate, with a keen sense of justice supported by a great sense of humour'.

The evening buzzed with an air of excitement and, judging from the smiles on the faces of the valedicts, their parents and staff members, it was an event to be remembered throughout their lives. The entertainment by the College choir was magnificent. As I sat, observed and took in all the zest for life in

the valedicts, I pondered the thought of paving the way for my grandson's education at Saints College at James Cook University.

I am grateful for the wonderful experience of being part of this great event. Food for thought indeed. Which reminds me to say that the meal was excellent. I was so enthralled in the evening program that the menu was an afterthought. That is something from a Pacific Islander!

The latest news on Deborah Pennington is that she is returning to Australia in January, 2017.

In the peace and joy of Christmas,

Consy (Consolata) Sakaria

Since the College Dinner, the Grail National Team has received a letter from Lyndel. Here are some excerpts from it:

'I am so grateful to have been chosen to receive the Grail Award at Saints College, James Cook University. During the Valedictory Dinner presentations, this award was described so thoughtfully, I feel blessed to be its recipient... This year has been my final year at James Cook as I have now completed my Bachelor of Pharmacy. This also marks my final year at the College after six years here, where I have been a Residential Assistant, this year Senior Residential Assistant. Being at the College has not only enabled me to live within a faithful community; I have become more confident in my beliefs and values as a young Catholic woman. My experiences here have not only helped me in my time so far, but will be integral to my future, well beyond my days at the College.'



A personal journal

THOUGHTS IMAGES AND REFLECTION

This is the second edition of an 80 page A5 sized journal containing beautiful photographs and quotations from across cultures and times. It is a work of the Grail in Australia, inspired by the Prison Journal project of Sr Joan Chittister in the USA.

Blank pages allow you to record your own thoughts and words of wisdom.

For every journal sold, one copy will be given to an inmate in a NSW correctional centre.

We invite you to purchase a copy. .

Cost: **\$10 (plus postage). .**

To order copies of the journal, please email:

grailjournal@ozemail.com.au



The Three Kings

Dorothee Soelle

I've thought a lot about why they
went
a major disturbance in the sky
a threefold source of light
in an unexpected place
an unfamiliar star among familiar
ones
is that reason enough to set out
on sand-drifted roads
carrying stale water in leather
bags month after month
putting aside for now the question
of higher powers
that might have influenced them
I have no grasp of things like that
I would call what drove them
from home where they must have
had it good
I would call this revolutionary
virtue of the modern era curiosity
this I'd guess is what spurred
them on
they wanted to see what was up
to straighten out a new confusion
to account for the unexpected
brightness
and incorporate it in the existing
order
so they built a more powerful
telescope
it didn't help
didn't clear anything up
the new light just glowed more
brightly than ever
so they chartered
well-to-do as they were
a fair-sized caravan
to run down that star
So they bargained bought
organised laid in supplies
mapped out with thoroughness
and foresight their route and
watering places
planned to travel at night
so they could promptly modify
their plan
in accordance with the somewhat
erratic
course of the star
so they set out
on their arduous way to explore
this mysterious disturbance
brought into the world
by light

Were they able to explain this star
did they go home
conscious of a higher order
are they still underway
tracing irregularities
in the heavens and on earth
did they accommodate
unexpected brightness
to the everyday twilight around
them
or is there a chance
that they accommodated
themselves
to amazing light
could it be harnessed if so for
what did they see clearer when

they got there
more important still
did they who saw it
change
reports are few
evidence scant
but assuming they did change
I would praise the travellers
and rejoice in them and
if this uncommon light is still
shining
look at it long and often
for their sake
hoping fervently
for change