



Newsletter

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MOMENT

I feel that today I embark again
on great adventures.
Obscure words float in the air.
And my desire sings – so I record
in all my senses the experience of this moment.

Resonating deeply
the world I have dreamed
awaits
the commitment of my actions.

And thousands of actions sleep in my fingers.
.....

I hear calling me
the voice of things I know and love.

And again I make my way towards the sea.

(Sophia de Mello – translated from the original Portuguese by Isabel Marujo)

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Publications

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Melbourne

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Sing of his name, give glory to His praise. (Psalm refrain sung at Orthodox Easter celebrations)

It has been another busy start to the year, with quite a few events, some comings and goings of visitors and moving on of members and friends.

Sadly, the year started with the death of a dear friend of the Grail, Ed Curmi. His funeral was a wonderful celebration, held at the ecumenical chapel at the old Good Shepherd Convent in Abbotsford in January. Ed was a kind and generous friend and supporter of the Grail and many of its members for over 60 years. Ed was also a huge support to Pat and Joanna in later years until he became too frail himself. We were pleased that Ann Niall, Alice and Kevin Ley, and Rita Flipo were present to celebrate his life.

In January, we welcomed Christine Reynolds from the Sydney Grail group with a lovely lunch at Ann Niall's. Christine was able to give us an overview of her stay with the inspiring Grail groups in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. We hope to see Christine more often when she visits Melbourne, as she did for the Pace e Bene program, discussed below.

We recommenced our *lectio divina* sessions at the beginning of February (on Thursdays this year) with the Gospel of John. We continue to find these gatherings spiritually and socially nourishing, but are concerned for the health of some of our members who have been unable to attend the meetings regularly.

Our regional meetings, the first held in early February, have been preoccupied with the discussion of the many events planned for this year, as well as giving input for the National Strategic Planning Meeting being held in Brisbane in May.

On the second weekend in February, we enjoyed the company of Ann About, Tricia Gemmell and Anne Day for the first National Team meeting of the year. Along with a productive meeting, our interstate visitors were able to spend time with their hosts, Genny, Ann and Andrea, and visit Pat, Joanna and Rita, as well as relax over a delicious meal at a local Thai restaurant.

In March, Irena and Kevin Dunn and Andrea attended an evening at Immaculate Conception Church in Hawthorn on 'Women's Life Stories' about their journeys in spirituality. Irena and Kevin were also impressed with a series on the Gospels at the same venue during Lent.

Sarah Mabanja from Kenya and Ruth Crowe from Sydney joined us for our April meeting. They were able to give us some insights into their experience of the *Non- Violent Interfaith Leadership* program held the preceding week at Amberley. Organised by Pace e Bene, of which Lauren Lockwood-Porter is a member (she was also a presenter in the program), we were pleased to have these Grail members participating along with people from various faiths and cultural backgrounds around the country and overseas. Fortunately, Sarah had finally got her visa approved with the support of Fran Warner (Sydney Grail) and Dale Hess of Pace e Bene. Sarah and Ruth joined us for the Lenten reflection and in the evening for Lauren's birthday celebration. Lauren and Mark hosted Sarah and Ruth for their stay in Melbourne. We will see Sarah again in late May, following the Strategic Planning meeting when we look forward to sharing one another's understandings and experiences.

Prior to the Non-Violence program, a weekend retreat was held which Lauren, Mark and Andrea (in part) attended. It was a great opportunity to meet and share with like-minded people on a spiritual path to peace.

Our first ecumenical activity this year was a gathering to honour the Russian Orthodox Easter. Mark Lockwood hosted us at 'Hesed' with a beautiful display of Easter eggs, icons and photos and an informative explanation, comparing Orthodox and Roman Easter celebrations. We began and ended with a sung ritual and the psalm refrain I quoted

above. Irena Dunn was also able to contribute some of her own knowledge and experience. Then we shared an authentic Russian Easter brunch, provided by Mark, Irena and Andrea.

Pat and Joanna continue to manage their health with fortitude, as does Mary Considine who is a friend of long standing. We ask for your prayers in support of ill members, including Clare Price who is about to undergo another procedure on her eyes.

We wish Barbara and Jim Erskine all the best in their move back to Queensland and thank Barbara for her friendship and contributions as a member in the south!

In conclusion, we have been working on completing the production of some Grail greeting cards and shall soon have them available for members to use as gifts and 'thank you' notes.

A Happy Easter season to you all!

Andrea Venier

Sydney

The Sydney Centre opened as usual at the beginning of February after the summer break and in time to make the final preparations for the public programs we planned for the early months of the year. Our monthly meetings of members always include an hour of reflection and we are grateful to Mishka Jambor for accepting our invitation in March to present her insights into the 'darkness' that Mother Teresa of Calcutta is said to have endured for 50 years of her life.

For five Thursdays during Lent we took up the theme of *Pilgrimage* as a metaphor for the spiritual journeying that we all do through life. (Elsewhere in the Newsletter you will find two texts from this program: some poetic reflections and a personal account of the experience of walking the Camino across the French Pyrenees to Santiago de Compostela.) The sessions dwelt on the practice of pilgrimage in Australian aboriginal culture and in Christian and Muslim traditions; also on the associated spiritual practice of the labyrinth, which, along with pilgrimage, has become a popular activity

today for increasing numbers of people, whether of religious faith or not. Participants left for home on the last night very much enriched and grateful to the twelve speakers who raised our spirits beyond our expectations.

6th May is World Labyrinth Day. Two of our speakers have organised events: Emily Simpson, who is responsible for a labyrinth being built in Centennial Park, has invited anyone who is interested to walk 'for peace and unity'; and Donna Mulhearn is officially opening her Retreat Centre in Woodford in the lower Blue Mountains, where she has two labyrinths, one in the classical style and the other in the form of a Celtic triple spiral.

Also during Lent, Tricia Gemmell led three Saturday sessions, 10 am - 2 pm on *Ecological Conversion*, to which Pope Francis called us all. Participants explored what was being asked of us referencing the work of such eco- theologians as Thomas Berry, Elizabeth Johnson, Denis Edwards and Sallie McFague.

Long-running programs, such as *Food for the Soul* weekly on Wednesday evenings, 7.30 – 9 pm, and the bi-monthly reflections on Tuesday morning, 10 am – 12 noon, reconvened for the year. On Wednesdays we are still reading and reflecting on the Gospel of John. On the Tuesdays, the basic text is *The Grace in dying: How we are transformed spiritually as we die*, by Kathleen Dowling Singh, who sees a clear correlation between the inner journey of the dying process and the spiritual journey to which she believes we are all called.

On 29th April, our meeting room was again filled with men and women interested in the session, *Let's Talk about the Anzac Myth*, led by Rev. Michael Barnes from the Uniting Church in Gordon. There was vigorous discussion on the religious, cultural and political content of the Anzac myth; on questions of national identity and the role of war in our society; and on making peace the ultimate national goal.

We have welcomed back to the Centre long-time friends who have been convening monthly meetings here regularly over several years, in particular, Joyce Kornblatt, an inspired facilitator of a creative writing

workshop, and Sophie Guest, herself a gifted writer, with her spiritual reflection group.

The Book Club, always the first to meet in the New Year, gathered towards the end of January and has been doing so in the months since. The book for May is *Those Who Come After* by Elisabeth Holdsworth.

We are delighted to have had staying with us for a few weeks, *Sarah Mabanja* from the Grail in Kenya. Sarah is in Australia for a three-month experience and will be spending time in Brisbane and Melbourne also. She arrived just in time for a workshop on living non-violently, organised in Melbourne by Pace e Bene and will be an observer at the national Strategic Planning meeting in Brisbane at the end of May. Here, she has participated in the Centre programs; and various members have taken her to other projects and locations around the city and met with her for discussion on topics of concern and interest.

We recently welcomed *Narelle Tasker* into the 'Avila' household for six months. Narelle, a specialist nurse, came to the Centre for the first time to attend the Lenten program. And an unexpected joy was the arrival in Sydney at the end of April of *Lucy Kelly* from Gillingham in Dorset, England, for a short reunion with family and friends. Her nephew, Ben, is to be married in Melbourne on Saturday 6th May, and she flies home early the next day. Lucy continues her community based social work now in lovely Sherborne.

As representatives of The Grail in the Faith and Ecology Network (FEN), Sheila Hawthorn and Alison Healey have attended two critical meetings of this multi-faith project in February and April. The first was a weekend at the Rahamim Ecological Learning Centre, a project of the Sisters of Mercy, in Bathurst. Neil Davidson, a skilled and sensitive facilitator, guided the group through a process of exploring options for the Network's future. The Columban Mission Institute (CMI) took the initiative to create FEN and has sustained it up till now, but the CMI will, sadly, be no more after September this year. FEN urgently needs to secure its continuance and this weekend was a first major step towards this goal. We reviewed FEN's history, heard

one another's stories of involvement, reflected on FEN's vision and mission, imagined possibilities and affirmed our ongoing commitment. The spirit of the meeting was uplifting, the natural and spiritual environment of Rahamim and the hospitality of its staff contributing much to all that was achieved. There has since been a larger Stakeholders' Meeting at the Australian Catholic University campus in North Sydney, where practical planning was progressed further.

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET), in which The Grail is also represented in the Working Group, will hold its annual fund-raising dinner at a Turkish restaurant in Surry Hills on 16th May. AFTINET depends entirely on the support of community organisations and individuals to fund its challenging work for justice in trade agreements. The range of AFTINET's work extends from expert and reliable research to public education through forums, rallies and contributions in various public media to lobbying decision-makers at the Federal and State levels of government. AFTINET also works in cooperation with similar networks in other countries.

Some major repairs to 'Avila' continue this year – inevitable after 80 years of existence. There would be more to repair if the original building had not been so very well designed and constructed. So, we have been visited by a structural engineer, a project manager, roofers, builders, plumbers, fencing contractors and tree surgeons. By the way, the kitchen radio, the toaster and the dishwasher all died this year, too. We hope 2017 will see the end of our troubles.

Finally, a moving response from an inmate in a New South Wales prison, who was given, by a religious sister who ministers in his prison, a copy of the Personal Journal we produced last year. We were so heartened by the message he sent to us through the pastoral worker that we want to share it with you. He wrote: 'As an inmate of a Correctional Centre, I write to express my gratitude for your journal, and the comfort it has given me and especially my mother. She is quite elderly and the ordeal of going through security searches, etc, would be a severe threat to her health, if she were able to visit me. But with your journal, I can cut out photos and the associated

quotations and send them to her with my weekly letters. I know she is touched by the thoughts and words of wisdom in the journal. One day when I am released, I look forward to assisting organisations such as yours who provide solace to inmates, in any way I can. God bless all of you.'

We pray God's blessing on him and his mother too. We have one more parish sale to organise and the distribution of this second edition of the journal will be completed.

May you know the abundance of God's blessing in this Easter season.

(The NSW Grail group)

Brisbane

Easter greetings to each and all.

Most of us in Brisbane have dried out after the impact of Cyclone Debbie. She spread her fury widely. Such devastation and tragedy around Queensland and northern NSW – our hearts and prayers are with all those struck by the wind and water she brought. Mary Omedo saw scenes of Debbie's destruction on the news in the Netherlands and contacted Mary Nelson to check if everyone was OK. Thank you, Mary.

The Brisbane Grail group began 2017 activities by gathering at the home of Jay and Dudley Scoullar to reflect, hope, plan, eat and share. Jay provided a magnificent spread, as she always does, and Dudley made sure everyone was comfortable with a cool drink. We had asked Jay to host a lunch at the beginning of the year, rather than in Advent as she has done for many years. As it happened this coincided with discussions about strategic planning and Diana Girle joined us to launch the process. We then reflected on things we hoped for this year and prayed together.

We are currently assisting Ann Aboud and the National Team to plan the national Strategic Planning weekend in May in Brisbane. We look forward to meeting and working with Grail members from other

states. Helen Jeffcoat is putting her wonderful creativity to work yet again to surprise us all.

Currently we are reading and reflecting on living, dying and transformation from *The Grace in Dying* by Kathleen Dowling Singh. Many lively discussions have taken place on ideas and issues raised.

Jan O'Donoghue has completed a history of 'Ballybrac', the Grail Centre in Mackay from 1954 to 1984, relying heavily on the research and initial draft made by Dinny Culican Ward some years ago. Jan will be speaking on this history to the Catholic Historical Society at the Francis Rush Centre, St Stephen's Cathedral on 1st August, 5.30 pm.

We have been blessed to meet Olive Rusera and her daughters recently arrived in Brisbane. As many in Sydney know, Olive and her husband, Dio, and family are from Rwanda and settled in Sydney when they arrived in Australia. Josephine Vidler, Jill's daughter, has met up with the eldest daughter, Naomi, at the University of Queensland to help her find her way around. We all look forward to getting to know Olive, Dio and their daughters as they establish themselves in their new home. We are also very fortunate to welcome Barbara and Jim Erskine as new residents in Brisbane. Barbara was able to attend the first meeting for 2017 at Jay's home and the most recent meeting at Ann's home. Most of us have known Barbara for a long time and look forward to her involvement in our Brisbane group. We are looking forward to catching up with Consy Sakaria, a Grail member from Townsville, when she travels to Brisbane for work after Easter.

Mary Mennis obtained a few more copies of her recently published book, *Rempi to Rebiamul: Missions from Madang to Mt Hagen, 1896 to 2016* and Grail members were delighted to be able to purchase them. Mary is working on another book titled, *Lakatoi*, which is the name of the large trading canoes once used in the Port Moresby area.

Maggie and Reto Jenatsch and Claudi had occasion to celebrate recently when their son and brother, Bruno Musrau, married his long-

term partner, Cassie. Their lovely children, Teara, Elarni, Soriah, Stanley and Mahali, aged 15 years to 8 months, delighted in the occasion. Jill Herbert and Pat Vidler joined Maggie and all the family to celebrate this happy time.

Mary Nelson attended an International Women's Day evening panel discussion, where many women shared their bold moments to reflect the theme, 'Be Bold for Change'. Mary continues to share life with the Iraqi family she has come to know well. Ann Aboud participated in a workshop on Non-violent Action for Climate Justice, hosted by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) at the Multi-faith Centre at Griffith University on 8th April.

Some of our members have travelled, are travelling or will travel shortly. Ann was recently in Vietnam and was shocked by some of the stories from the Vietnam war she heard there. Elizabeth Lancaster is currently in London and will be taking a river cruise in Europe. Jay and Dudley will travel to the USA and achieve their dream of visiting Alaska. And Mary Anne Baillie is going to Darwin and Arnhem Land taking The Ghan to Adelaide, before making her way back to Mackay.

We wish everyone the blessings of the Risen Christ in this Easter season. May your hearts be open to new joys and new possibilities.

Jill Herbert

MY CAMINO

by Geoffrey Gemmell

Geoffrey's moving presentation during the Lenten reflections at the Sydney Centre is here edited for the Newsletter

Camino means in Spanish and Italian *I walk*. It is also a noun, meaning *journey* or *way*. I did not consciously start my *camino* as a pilgrimage; for me it was a challenge and a walk, a very long walk. But now I accept that my *camino* was a pilgrimage. It was more than a trip or a journey. It had a profound effect on me so that I feel called to help others less fortunate than myself.

What is a pilgrimage?

To my mind, one of the essential aspects of a pilgrimage is that it involves walking. Another aspect is drawn from the derivation of the word *pilgrim*, which comes from the Middle English word *pelegrim*, from the mediaeval Latin word *peregrinus* which means *foreigner*. So, being in a place that is unfamiliar is another important part of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage also requires, I think, going to a sacred place. My experience is that the sacred place is not necessarily a famous church, or a shrine, or an acknowledged centre of holiness.

To my enormous surprise, I felt a great sense of disappointment when I reached Santiago de Compostela. I'm not sure why. It may have been that the cathedral was clad in scaffolding or the commercialism of the city. Perhaps, because my journey had come to an end, and that of itself was a cause of disappointment. Interestingly, John Brierley, the author of a number of books on various Caminos to Santiago, anticipates that the pilgrim may feel disappointment on arrival. He says this:

'Entering the cathedral can bring tears of joy...or disappointment. Whatever our individual reaction, it is absolutely valid in that moment, so honour it.'

I love the beauty of God's creation, so for me the sacred place on the Camino was the ocean that envelopes Fisterra, ('Land's End') where I ended my walk. To arrive there was a truly wonderful experience, my spirits lifted and I was overcome with joy. There was no sense of the disappointment I had felt at Santiago. Here I encountered the presence of God in nature rather than in man-made buildings.

It was the journey itself, the places I visited, the people I met and the experiences en route that were such an important aspect of my Camino. How you journey along the way, I suggest, affects the impact of the pilgrimage on your life.

I think another essential element of being a pilgrim is to be stripped bare, at least as bare as possible, both physically and metaphorically

speaking. I did the Camino, walking about 900 kilometres across Spain, carrying a haversack that weighed, without food and water, less than 8 kilograms. I also tried, generally successfully, to stick to a budget of €30 per day, about the equivalent of \$45, which included breakfast, lunch, dinner, accommodation and a well-deserved beer at the end of a long walking day. Why was it important to stick to a budget? I wanted to keep it simple but I also wanted to honour those who had gone before me – the innumerable pilgrims through the centuries for whom the Camino was far from a lavish experience. Being stripped bare physically also enables one to be open more easily to the Spirit; and to contemplate and meditate as one walks. Presumably this was the experience of Jesus who went with nothing into the desert to pray. He went, not with fanfare and majesty, but in simplicity. It is much harder to be open to the Spirit if you are surrounded by comfort and riches, would you not agree? It is also hard to reflect if you are preoccupied with the weight on your back!

My experience of making a pilgrimage from five aspects

I felt the effects of the pilgrimage, probably in this order of significance: spiritually, socially, ecologically, religiously and physically.

What do we understand by ‘spiritual’ or ‘spirituality’? I am a fan of Ronald Rolheiser, Canadian-born theologian. He says this:

‘Spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside of us, about how we channel our eros. And how we do channel it, the disciplines and habits we choose to live by, will either lead to a greater integration or disintegration within our bodies, minds and souls, and to a greater integration or disintegration in the way we are related to God, others, and the cosmic world’.(*The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*)

So how was the Camino a spiritual experience for me? Getting up each morning and putting on your shoes and walking, walking for days and weeks, sometimes in considerable pain with blisters or tendonitis, says something to me about the channelling of the fire

within. I found walking deeply meditative and the sound of my poles on the ground rhythmical and musical. The Spirit was singing. I found myself singing, usually old hymns we were taught at school.

Rolheiser speaks of integration in the way we are related to others. Every day without fail something happened to me that I believe was a sign of the Spirit at work: a lady at Torres de Rio dropping me a *baretta* from her first floor balcony when I could not find a bread shop; Andreas, the Dutch Knight of Malta offering me a soothing and refreshing drink; the lady in the shop just out of Léon who gave me a bottle of red wine after I had only spent €2.75 for some food; the man in the shop at Pamplona who saved my Camino by getting me into a pair of light, soft and comfortable walking shoes, packed my boots for me and told me how to deal with the intricacies of Spanish Post Offices. So many pilgrims I spoke to had experiences which enriched their lives, which suggests to me that the Spirit is alive and well on the Camino.

Reflecting on the social impact of the Camino, I recall the wonderful people I met on the way. I made two good friends I believe: Jean, from France and Anna, a deeply spiritual woman who denies any religious belief, from Italy. The three of us walked together for many days. When someone stole my walking poles I was absolutely devastated, but both Jean and Anna kept me company for two days, walking beside and behind me and encouraging me. I am not sure what I would have done without them. Jean waited on the outskirts of Santiago for two days so that we could walk in to the city together. Anna arrived the day after me. I plan to see them both in June-July when Tricia and I will be in Europe. But there were so many others, such as Pierre from Quebec walking with a close family relative; Mia, a young German woman, who walked with me for the last nine days of the Camino; and an amazing Dutch couple in their 70s, Lucas and Sara, who had walked from their home in Holland to Santiago, and then on to Fisterra. I am blessed to have a gift of languages and was in paradise speaking five languages every day, French, Italian, German, Spanish and occasionally English. This, of course, greatly enriched the social experience of the Camino for me.

What a stunningly beautiful country Spain is, not to forget the first day of walking in France across the Pyrenees -- some of the most lovely countryside I have ever seen. I delighted in a series of the most spectacular sunrises and in the wonderful abundance of farms of grain and stock, of fields of olives and vines laden with grapes. But I was deeply distressed that there were so many people walking the Camino with little or no respect for our common home, Mother Earth. Rubbish and bodily waste just deposited anywhere. I thought, if people on the Camino are treating the beautiful and sacred path in this way, what hope for humanity? And I remembered the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*:

'This sister [the earth] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will...This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22).'

For most, the *Camino Frances* is a Christian pilgrimage, especially for Catholics. In 2015, about 92% of pilgrims gave 'religious' as their reason for following the Camino to Santiago, with fewer than 8% saying 'not religious'.

For me, being able to participate in a pilgrims' Mass after walking each day was very special. On almost every occasion the priest would call to the front of the congregation those who were pilgrims. We received a special pilgrims' blessing and sometimes were given a beautiful and thoughtful memento of our stay in the particular town. At Hontanas, I was given a beautiful cross, which I treasure and now wear daily. Here I also found a Spanish-English text of the Mass. I now use it once a month here in Sydney when I take an elderly Venezuelan woman to a Spanish Mass at Mascot.



Finally, walking the *Camino Frances* is hard, very hard. Walking 20-30 kilometres every day, day after day, is very challenging, especially since it is far from flat terrain. In one day, the path rose to 1,450 metres. Most accidents occur coming downhill. Understandably, you are elated to reach the top, but also fatigued and you drop your guard a little. I passed at least 12 memorials to people who had died on the Camino, the saddest being one day from Santiago. I also developed blisters that needed dressing every morning (and sometimes during the day!) and that lasted for about two weeks. Near Atapuerca, you have to walk over very large flint stones; the track is basically one of rocks and boulders. The last big climb is to Ocebrero, 1,000 metres straight up, hard going after walking for 3 weeks, but, oh so rewarding! The sunrise and the views were stunning. My response to the physical demands of the Camino was one of gratitude. I gave thanks to all my forebears for the body and genes they had given me.

Indeed, at the end of my Camino I felt profoundly grateful for all that I have. At times along the way I felt overwhelmed with love. I don't understand why I am so fortunate, but I know that the gift of the Camino is not for some self-serving purpose. It is spurring me into action: to care for our common home, Mother Earth, and for those less fortunate. What course the Spirit takes, only time will tell.

Excerpts from IGNATIUS THE PILGRIM

Andrew Bullen, SJ

Ignatius the Pilgrim is a poem consisting of several cantos interspersed with *Annotations*, three-line reflections on being a pilgrim. We are a pilgrim people and these short verses offer us a creative stimulus to reflection on our spiritual journey.

ANNOTATIONS

1. For pilgrims (always limping),

 strolling, walking, running

 are exercises in love, in prayer.
2. Stripped of possessions and home,

 a pilgrim can only travel light.

 Grace and a pilgrim's staff take your weight.
3. Footfall after footfall, weary

 or fresh, a pilgrim never walks alone:

 Christ the Lord is beside you on the way.
4. The imperatives of walking: start again,

 faster, turn here, stop, go back, keep moving,

 whittle the heart into prayer and love.
5. Places are made holy by their story,

 the spirit in which you journey to them,

 receive their gift, and leave them.

6. The stars will guide you,
people you meet will be signs,
and your prayerful heart your compass.
7. Maybe footsore, maybe footloose or waylaid,
despite missteps and wrong turns,
take up the Cross again: resume your pilgrimage.
8. Remember Christ the Lord walked many a mile,
sweet and hard, knew tiredness and rest,
staggered through brutal streets to Calvary's hill.
9. You meet the world on the way,
but are not held by it.
For pilgrims, the horizon is always the universe.
10. Your destination is always a surprise,
a holy place always gifts you with silence;
leave the Holy Land and it remains with you for ever.

(These verses formed the substance of Andy's presentation which launched the program of evening reflections at the Sydney Grail Centre during Lent.)