



(Writing at the beginning of the pandemic, Franciscan theologian Ilia Delio reminds us that we can celebrate the risen Christ in our lives and in the natural world.)

‘We have an invitation to go to church in a new way, by praying before the new leaves budding through dormant trees or the wobbly flowers by the side of the road pushing through the solid earth. . . [With Francis of Assisi], we too can sing with the air we breathe, the sun that shines upon us, the rain that pours down to water the earth. And we can cry with those who are mourning, with the forgotten, with those who are suffering from disease or illness, with the weak, with the imprisoned. We can mourn in the solidarity of compassion but we must live in the hope of new life. For we are Easter people, and we are called to celebrate the whole earth as the body of Christ. Every act done in love gives glory to God: a pause of thanksgiving, a laugh, a gaze at the sun, or just raising a toast to your friends at your virtual gathering. The good news? “He is not here!” Christ is everywhere, and love will make us whole’.

Ilia Delio, the Hours of the Universe, Reflection on God, Science, and the Human Journey (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), 195-196.

Wishing you blessings of joy and hope this Easter.

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PUBLICATIONS

Global Justice Overcoming Poverty Bulletin

4 pages of short up-to-date reports and articles. Issued bi-monthly from January.

To receive a copy, contact info@grailaustralia.org.au

Available by email or by post if necessary.

Pacific Outlook

4 pages on economic, social and environmental issues of the small island nations of the Pacific. Issues bi-monthly from February.

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Sydney

In late January we were delighted to attend the wedding of Norma Tracey (Sydney Grail member and friend) and Wally Shand. They chose to have a 'Village Wedding', inviting not only family and friends but all the families in the street where Norma has lived for many years! A canopy sheltered them and the marriage celebrant from the severe heat that day as they exchanged their wedding vows. Other canopies sheltered all of us as we sat at tables that ran down the middle of the street, which had been cordoned off for the celebration. A number of families carried their tables and sat under trees while others put on hoses so the children could cool off! It was a truly wonderful day for all of us and such a generous celebration. We wish Norma and Wally happiness and lots of blessings.

At our first Grail gathering for the year in early February we gave thanks for the life of one of our dear Sydney Grail women, Jillian Morrison. We remembered Jillian as a generous woman, a woman of prayer and action. Jillian had a close connection to the Benedictines at Arcadia and joined them over the years for a 'quiet' and restful break. She led us in prayer and meditation from time to time.

THANKSGIVING

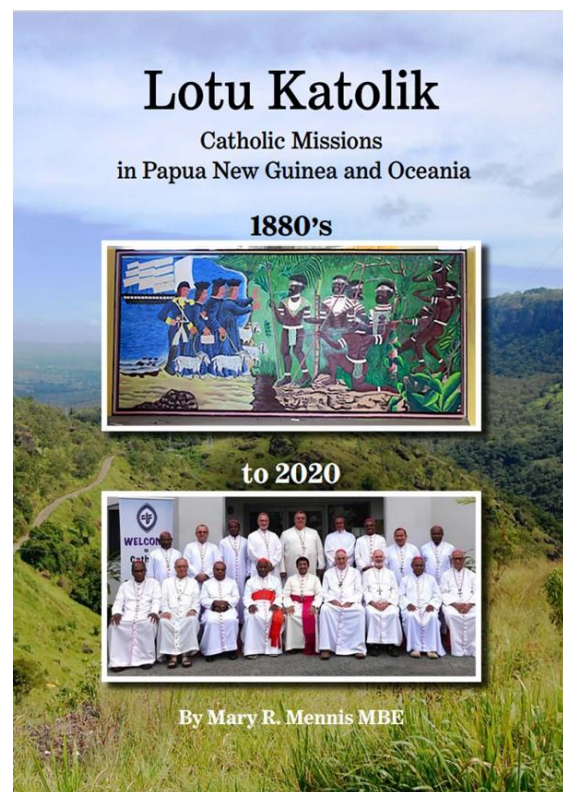
*We celebrate the life of Jillian:
In which love has been revealed
Love has been given and received
Love in Action. Amen*

We have already had visitors staying at 'Avila' this year. The first was Consy Sakaria-Lopa, a Grail member from Townsville. Consy, born in Tokelau, had just returned from New Zealand where she has many relatives. She came to share about her experiences and family

gatherings in NZ with her family who live in Sydney.

Judy Brown, a member of our new National Grail Team came from Brisbane to visit in February. Judy wanted to get to know the Grail women in Sydney better, as well as our hopes and dreams for the future of the Grail here. Judy had a busy schedule as she met face-to-face with each of us. We appreciated her visit very much.

Another Grail member from Brisbane, Mary Mennis (nee Eccles), stayed with us in March. Sheila, Ruth and Mary McDermid joined a good crowd of members of the Sydney branch of the Catholic Historical Society in the Crypt of St Patrick's, to hear Mary give a very interesting presentation on her new book. *Lotu Katholik* records the stories of the arrival of early missionaries in different locations across Papua New Guinea and other parts of Oceania.



Mary had been asked by the Archbishop of Port Moresby to do this research and create a textbook for seminarians to use in their studies at the Bomana Catholic Seminary in Port Moresby. Mary and her husband, Brian lived and worked in PNG for many years.

Mary also took the opportunity to honour her father's memory at the beginning of her talk. Sir John Eccles received the Nobel Prize for Science in 1964 and she is one of his and Renee Eccles's nine children. The family came to know the Grail women when they first arrived in Australia in 1936 and remained friends of the Grail over many years. Mary also mentioned that when her sister, Rose, was born in England, they lived near J.R.R. Tolkien and he became Rose's godfather! Mary has a photo of Tolkien reading *Lord of the Rings* to Rose and his daughter, who was Rose's age!!!

Reflection mornings have begun again at the Grail Centre. This year we are reflecting on the book, *Teilhard de Chardin on the Gospels: the message of Jesus for an evolutionary world*, by Louis Savary, who has been reflecting on and teaching about Teilhard's work for over 50 years. Chosen by Kay Hunt, Terese Sheriden and Sheila Hawthorn, it is proving to be a good choice. The group of people who came to the first session requested a monthly meeting instead of meeting every second month as was first proposed! *Food for Soul* has started again on Zoom on Wednesday evenings, 7.30-9pm. We have begun the year reflecting on the Acts of the Apostles and the life of the early Church. How we yearn for the spirit of those early Christians in the Church and world of today!

Ruth Crowe and Kay Hunt as well as a friend, Martha Mollison, continue to run a project in Parramatta teaching English to newly arrived migrants, which we began in 2022. Two more trained teachers from the Uniting Church have joined us this year.

Last year we started with men and women from the Afghan community and this year migrants from Iraq, Asia, India and Vietnam have joined us. A number of the younger people from classes last year have gone on to University and TAFE or have found work, while others are making good progress in Conversational English as well as learning to drive and having swimming lessons! All the teachers are volunteers and an NGO, *Host International* has given us three classrooms. The partnership between the Grail and Host International works very well.

Ruth continues to represent the Grail at meetings and activities of the 'From the Heart Alliance'. The alliance is an affiliation of Faith and Reconciliation Groups across Sydney who support the recognition of the First Australians in the Constitution through the provision of a Voice for First Nations to Parliament.

A few weeks ago, we had two special events at Avila. One was a day-long workshop run by Maggie Hamilton, writer, researcher and storyteller, who says, 'I'm mesmerised by conversations, by the choices we make, by the many ways our lives intersect. How we add breadth and depth to life'. The group enjoyed the day very much as well as our peaceful setting, especially the garden!

The other was a celebration of the success of Australian Women Preach, an initiative of the Grail and WATAC (Women and the Australian Church) over the past two years. Please see [pp.8- 9](#) for more.

We wish you all the blessings of Easter, especially hope and joy.

Ruth Crowe

Brisbane

Looking back

As diligent readers of the Newsletter will remember, some years ago Jill invited Margaret Hounslow to speak at a Brisbane meeting on her work with Days for Girls (DfG) in Ethiopia. Helen Jeffcoat and Jill helped with practical sewing support for DfG until it passed on to Parish sewing groups. Later, Ann visited Ethiopia with Margaret to see the projects first-hand.

On behalf of the Grail, Ann has continued to support Margaret's Ethiopian projects. The fundraising provides salaries for two midwives at the Dakuna Clinic run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady, support for Dr Catherine Hamlin's Fistula Hospital and the School for the Blind which does amazing work producing university graduates. Margaret and a team of us collect and pack containers of goods for Valerie Browning, from Australia who works with the nomadic people in the Afar region. Recently, Ann ironed all the donated clothes for the container – a task she never hopes to repeat. Further funds are raised by supporters attending the Villanova Players Theatre Program and Curry Nights. We are currently helping Margaret purchase a portable Ultrasound machine to increase the incidence of live births in Ethiopia, this wonderful but poor country that has never been colonized and remains the only Christian majority country in Africa.

May we continue to help where and when we can.

Memories

Maggie and Reto Jenatsch, who met and married in Wewak in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea but have lived in Brisbane with their family for many years now, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary earlier in the year.

Sheila Hawthorn who worked on the mission in Wewak sent them a photo that showed the Wewak Airstrip, which was occupied by the Japanese during World War II. Bishop Leo Arkfeld began an air service within the province after the war and was himself a pilot. Maggie remembers flying to Marienberg in a Cessna 180 with her work as an Infant Welfare Nurse. Reto worked as the Aircraft Maintenance Officer for the Air Services from 1979 to the mid-80's. He remembers Bishop Leo Arkfeld as a wonderful pilot.

And from Antarctica!

Dom Vidler, son of Pat Vidler and Jill has enjoyed his first three months at Casey Station in Antarctica. There have been photos of many camping events in the snow and of course, of penguins. Most of the summer expeditioners have departed, leaving thirty to keep the station running over the months of winter darkness.

Easter Greetings to all.

Judy continues her travels

In February Judy had the opportunity to visit Townsville and have a 'Welcome to the Grail' meeting at the House of Prayer with Consy Sakaria-Lopa. The meeting had been publicised through local churches. Those who attended appreciated the session and wanted to receive the Grail Newsletter. Judy was happy to organise the meeting as she was already visiting Townsville and as a member of the National Grail Team has a personal commitment to ensuring that awareness of the activities of the Grail in Australia is increased. The women who came were enthusiastic and shared at a deep level.

Consy Sakaria-Lopa was asked to say a few words about her original link with the Grail. Consy did this in a most comprehensive way, by outlining her first meeting with Sheila Hawthorn and the many ways she had been supported by the

Grail, which helped her in her Social Work studies at James Cook University

Let us bloom where we are planted!

Ann Aboud, Jill Herbert and Judy Brown

Townsville

Emily Ferdinands is the winner of the 2022 Grail Award at Saints Catholic College, James Cook University in Townsville.

The Grail Award supports young women to realise their potential especially in leadership roles and their professional pursuits.



Emily Ferdinands

Jordan Hollands, Operation Manager at Saints College wrote:

‘Emily joined Saints in 2021 to study a Bachelor of Medicine and since arriving at Saints has moved from strength to strength in all of her endeavours. In 2022 she joined our student leaders as a Residential assistant (RA) and from all feedback from residents has proven to be an exemplary figure head for the principles Grail Women are committed to. Emily travelled from Berwick in Victoria and after a very short

period at Saints, demonstrated her strong sense of social justice, compassion and leadership skills. Emily continually offered support and assistance to any and all in need at Saints from not only her floor, but other blocks across college, and even extending the support to her fellow RAs. She excelled in her role as a RA to the extent that she was offered a senior RA position for 2023 based on her social, academic, sporting, theological and college contributions to date. Emily was a key coordinator for the Inter College Musical Competition for the dance and comedy and was heavily involved in the Winna Shield for 2022, seeing the Saints girls through to the AFL finals while maintaining a 6.0 GPA for her academics.

Impressive is an understatement – to say the very least!

It has been a privilege to have Emily at Saints as a strong role model for the many young girls who will travel in her footsteps behind her, seeing her strive to achieve in all areas of her life and smiling while doing it. We are looking forward to her mentoring and guiding 160 new students in 2023.’

Melbourne

Greetings one and all! I just wanted to let our friends know that we had a very successful auction on Saturday 25 March here in Melbourne!

We are pleased to advise that the Grail unit in Melbourne, which we call ‘Hesed’, sold at auction on that Saturday morning in late March. We are very pleased to say that the new owners are our neighbours in the front unit!! We are so happy that this has happened, as the family in Unit 1 have had a long connection with the Grail, having been there when Pat Sheeran moved into Unit 2 many years ago. The young Chinese couple in Unit 1 and their family bought our unit so that their elderly father can move in next door!!

It's a bittersweet moment in many ways, as we have many fond memories of our 'Hesed' unit. However, it is time to move on and meet in other ways, e.g. in each other's homes.

Thank you all for your support as we start a new chapter in the life of the Melbourne Grail.

Genny Grabau



Members of the Grail in Melbourne celebrating the successful sale of 'Hesed'

A big 'THANK YOU' to our Grail women in Melbourne for all the time and huge effort you put into making the unit so presentable for the sale and doing all the communication with the real estate agent and lawyers. All so competently done. And we appreciate all the work you did over many months, last year and this year, finding new homes for all manner of things that were in the unit as well as disposing of what was no longer needed.

***From your Grail sisters in Sydney,
Brisbane and North Queensland.***

Papua New Guinea

In a recent letter from Crescentia Lementi, she said their Wewak Grail group had 'a good number of young and new women coming to their Advent program'.

Crescentia added that when a local 11-year-old girl (who lives quite close to Primary schools) showed she was unable to read, their enquiries revealed the girl's mother could not afford to send her to school. The Grail then set up 'a project of Literacy and Numeracy under the mango tree outside the Grail house'.

An earlier program, 'Laikim na lukautim gut ol Pikinini' (take good care of all children) went really well, with Bible drama/study, action, songs, prayer, and sports, all finishing with light refreshments'.

The National Grail Team in Papua New Guinea (PNG) reports that this year Grail women from PNG are participating in five international Grail Programs, which aim to increase their Leadership skills as well as offering on-going formation in important areas of life within the international Grail community.

'A good number of our women participated in the *Grail Myth* introductory session in January via Zoom even though, at times, we still have problems with internet connections.

The other programs and attendees are: *Training for Transformation* and *Growing into the Grail* – Adriana George, Christine Saiwai and Denise Caspar.

Grail Link to the United Nations Network – Leonilla Wapi.

Leonilla attended the annual Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, held from 6-17 March, as part of the Grail Link to the UN program. The priority theme for this conference was: *Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.*

During this time Leonilla lived with the Grail women in the Bronx in New York and met other young women from around

the world who were sponsored by the international Grail to also attend this year's CSW Conference.

Grail Myth (Zoom) – Joanne Pepi and Monica Liumene. This is ongoing and they are currently participating in another four sessions.

Young Women's Leadership Program to be held in Portugal – Violet Okum and Briget Paimé.

These two young women will also participate in a summer school, World Youth Day and the Grail Pilgrimage to Spain.

The National Grail Team hopes that these events will be good learning experiences for the women and that they can help many young women when they come back home.

All in all, 2023 is a very busy year, which will end with our National Grail Assembly in December.

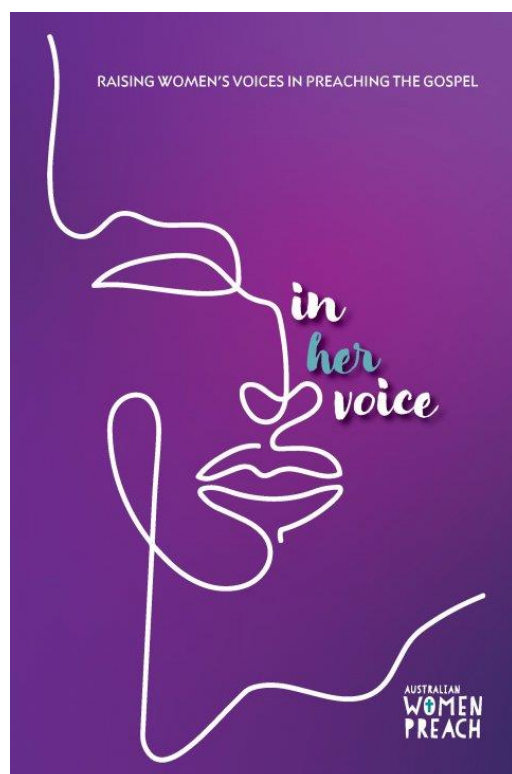
We wish you and your families many blessing at Easter.'

Crescentia Lementi and Monica Liumene



CELEBRATION OF THE LAUNCH OF 'IN HER VOICE'

Members of the Grail in Australia and Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) hosted a celebration at the Grail Centre in Sydney on 1 March to mark the up-coming launch of their



book, *In Her Voice: Raising Women's Voices in Preaching the Gospel*, and the success of Australian Women Preach over the past two years (and continuing!). Held in the garden at Avila it was attended by approximately 40 people on a fine, cool evening.

Most of the team who developed the idea of producing the weekly podcast of Australian Women Preach were present - Patricia Gemmell and Elizabeth Lee from the Grail, and Rebecca Beisler, Angela Marquis, Colleen Rowe, Philippa Wicksey, Andrea Dean and Tracy McEwan from WATAC, and Louise Maher (podcast producer). Andrea Dean, Tracy McEwan and Patricia Gemmell spoke about the excitement of successfully making the weekly podcasts with women from a variety of

backgrounds from across Australia and now producing a book of 28 of these gospel homilies.

It is a beautifully presented book and thank you to Karen Tayleur for putting it together. The leaves art work in the Welcome to Country is by Belinda Roberts and the cover art is by Sophie Cole. All the books brought to the celebration were sold and many orders taken.

We celebrated with wine and cheese and a ritual written by Elizabeth Lee and much conversation!

Many thanks to **Garratt Publishing** for publishing the book. The official launch of *In Her Voice* sponsored by Garratt Publishing took place online on 9 March.

You can purchase copies of the book from Garratt Publishing www.garrattpublishing.com.au and copies are also available from Pauline Books www.paulinebooks.com.au

Kay Hunt



THE OCEAN IS ABOUT SPIRITUALITY FOR US IN OCEANIA

Mary Anne Baillie reports on the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania.

'Oceans are a gift from God, and they must be used fairly and sustainably,' Pope Francis said in a papal message sent to the eighth Our Ocean Conference held March 2023 in Panama.

In February this year, the General Assembly of the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Oceania (FCBCO) was held in Suva, Fiji. 'Care for the Ocean' was one of the key themes of this assembly, attended by bishops of Oceania, priests, religious and laypeople. Speaking of this upcoming assembly in November 2022, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, of



Suva, Fiji, President of FCBCO addressed the impact of climate change on Oceania; ‘We are the Catholic Bishops of Oceania and we want to be prophets for the Ocean and for the people of Oceania.’

I see Archbishop Chong as a prophet for our time and especially for our part of the world, Oceania. I first encountered the archbishop in Brisbane in September 2019 where he addressed a workshop on *Laudato Si*’ that I attended. He was in Brisbane

to launch the ‘Season of Creation’, the annual ecumenical celebration of prayer and action for our common home, held from September 1, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and ends on October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. He spoke of the impact of climate change and rising sea levels in Fiji and other island nations, and of our need to care for the ocean. Being a native of Fiji, with a Chinese father and a Fijian mother, the archbishop has a deep understanding and appreciation of the importance and significance of the ocean for the culture and life of Fijians and the people of the other Pacific Island countries.

‘I grew up close to the ocean, living with my grandmother and the ocean is the soft music you hear on the background of the night,’ he said in *Stories from the Ocean* in 2021. ‘You can hear the gentle splashing of the ocean on the reefs. As children, the ocean is many things - entertainment, recreation, fun, and joy. It’s swimming, peddling around with our *bilibili* or bamboo raft and it’s just fun to be in the ocean.’ The ocean is a food bank, a place to fish but most significantly he says, ‘the ocean is about spirituality for us in Oceania. Most of the Oceania peoples have totems, gods that live in the Ocean. The ocean is their abode, this is where they live.’

Today the archbishop says that through science he has come to know a lot more about the ocean: that by providing 70% of the world’s oxygen, it plays an important part in the air we breathe; that the marine ecosystem has the greatest biodiversity on the planet and that Mother Ocean by regulating the warm and the cold seas regulates the world’s climate. ‘But today,’ says the archbishop, ‘the ocean is groaning. It is groaning because of the increase in temperature, because of overfishing, seabed mining, extractive industries and sea levels rising.’

He has embraced Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si*’ identifying with Francis’ call *to hear both the cry of earth and the cry of the poor*. For Archbishop Chong it is the cry of the ocean he and his people hear. After attending the Synod on the Amazon in Rome in October 2019 he began advocating for a Synod on the Ocean, and he has also begun work on a Theology for Oceania. As a theologian, Archbishop Chong says that the emerging question for him is ‘How do we speak about God to vulnerable people?’ He describes his work as a project

evolving out of his efforts to empower vulnerable people, particularly in Fiji affected by climate change and extractive industries.

He reflected on the suffering of Job, a good innocent person, and sees a parallel with his people of Oceania. He says that while their emissions of carbon are very small, they bear the brunt of the impact of carbon emissions, like rising sea levels, caused by other countries. In developing a theology of vulnerability, Archbishop Chong says it is his attempt to find a language for God in the midst of suffering so that people are not spectators but are people who are subjects of their history and can claim their agency for action. He emphasises that this work is a project in process and invites others to join him in this work.

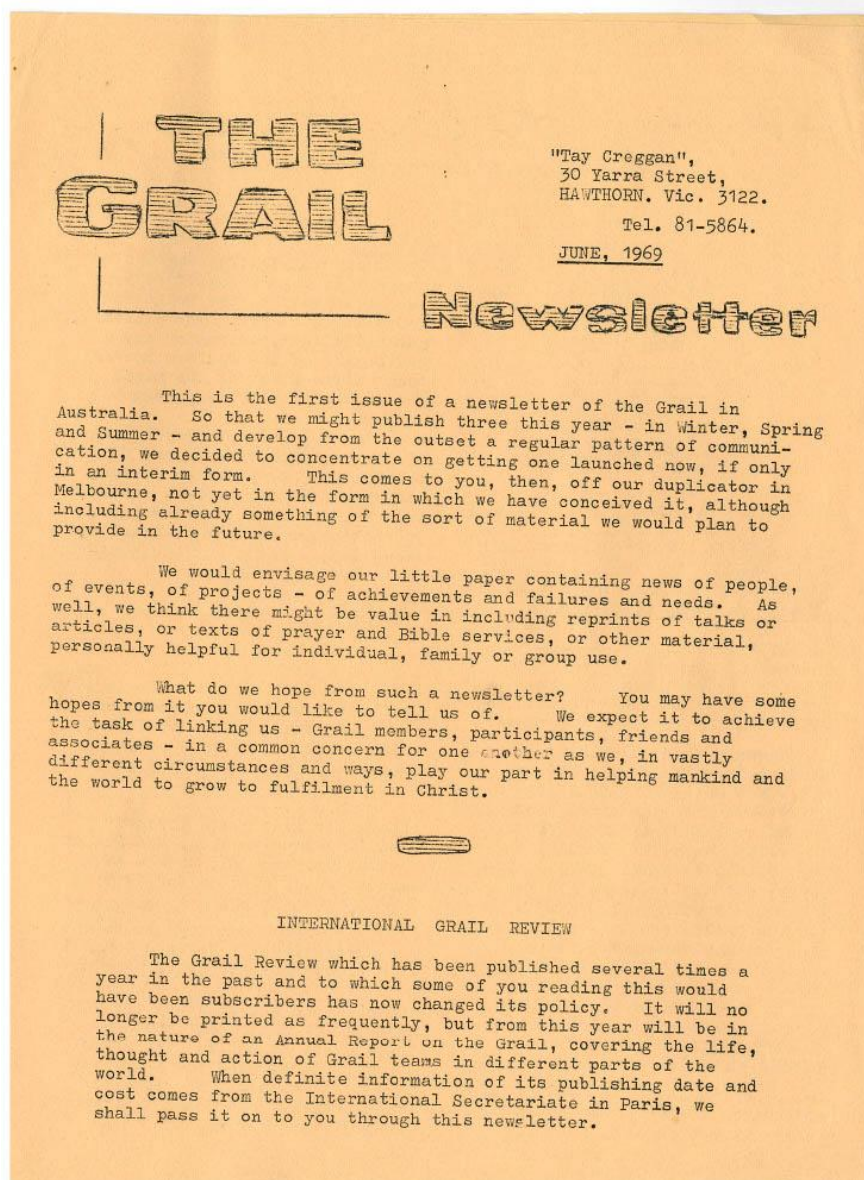
In following the daily reports on the FCBCO general assembly Archbishop Loy Chong's influence was evident. There was time to pray with liturgies that reflected the culture of the local people. There was time to listen to the voices of the island nations, particularly Fiji, of how climate change and extractive industries were affecting their environments and impacting on their lives. There was time to hear from the local theologians, and there was time to see. Delegates visited two villages. At Togoru, they observed the impact of extractive mining for gravel in the river resulting in the entire ecosystem being changed drastically. At Nakavu, they saw the impact on the coastal region and the resulting erosion as the sea level rises. Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane said, the bishops have heard the call for a theology of the Pacific so that 'we can speak with a distinctive voice and speak to the whole church right around the world.' At the heart of this theology is applying reason to faith in a way that does justice to the experience of the peoples of the Pacific.

In their concluding statement for the FCBCO Assembly the Catholic Bishops of Oceania say: *We recognise ecological conversion as an urgent mission priority not only for us, but also for the whole Church. Furthermore, we feel called to make our voices heard at the highest levels of government in our own countries, and also at the global level – in the Church and broader society – for the sake of our ocean home and its peoples.*

There is a challenge here for the church of Australia; a call to play our part in the ecological conversion necessary for the common good of all people of Oceania. Living in Mackay, with the Great Barrier Reef and beautiful Pacific Ocean to the East, and the coal mines of the Bowen and Galilee Basins to the west, I am very aware of the impact that the burning of this coal has on the reef and also on the lives of the vulnerable people of the island nations of Oceania. Queensland and Australia as a whole benefit from the export of coal while the burning of this coal adversely affects the lives of our neighbours of the small nations of Oceania. Bishop Anthony Randazzo, bishop of the Broken Bay Diocese is the new President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops of Oceania. Australia will host the next FCBCO General Assembly in four years' time. Archbishop Peter Loy Chong remains on the executive as deputy chair. It is good to know that we have such a prophet and advocate for the care of the oceans in our midst.

THANK YOU ALISON HEALEY

'This is the first issue of a newsletter of the Grail in Australia' wrote the editor, Alison Healey, in June 1969.



During the next 53 years three, and for several years, four issues of that Newsletter were published. In that time, of course, many changes have occurred including a different format, coloured photos, and quicker communication facilities enabling contributions to be accepted just past the deadline. Also, today's printing equipment certainly produces a very different document from a gestetner!!

However many many changes there may have been for the Newsletter itself, the one constant was the editor. Now, in 2023, we extend a huge THANK YOU to Alison for her commitment, energy and the high standard of publication she maintained for those 53 years.