



Newsletter

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Sept 2021

Vol. 53, No 2

Prepared in Sydney

You are in all I think; you are in all I imagine.
You are in the vast horizons; you are in the tiny seeds.
You are in the sheep grazing; you are in the river flowing.
You are in all that is being born; you are in all that is dying.
You are in everything; you never rest.

O Being, both uniform and varied!
You were when things began;
You will be when the universe comes to an end.

You are in the soul and in the senses.
You are in the spirit; you are in the letter.

And when time has run its course,
In heaven, in heaven, you will be.

(Manuel Bandeira, Brazilian poet (1886 - 1968))



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News from here and there

Sydney

We have been in maximum lockdown since June and in shorter periods of lockdown before that, as our State government tries to manage infection from the COVID-19 virus. So, the Grail Centre has been very, very quiet this year. Birds can safely ignore government regulations and so every day we have visits and recitals and conversations with them. In the last few years our long-time local residents - Australian ravens and magpies, kookaburras and native (noisy) miners have been forced to make room for persistent brush turkeys, ever proliferating through the northside suburbs since their predators were removed from the Lane Cove National Park. I imagine in the bird world, at least in Australia, they can pull rank on the strength of their formidable ancestry, being the only survivors of a species that walked the earth 30 million years ago, so the scientists tell us. Here they spend their days digging ankle-threatening holes in the lawn foraging for food and determinedly and interminably spreading leaves and soil over the front drive which Helen sweeps back to where they came from with equal determination. I could fill this news column with stories of significant encounters with birds but our human stories take priority here.

Regular commitments which would normally bring participants to our meeting spaces, and are now maintained benefit of Zoom, include our weekly Wednesday evening *lectio divina* (currently reading and meditating on Matthew's Gospel); the Tuesday morning sessions of study and discussion of a chosen text led by Tricia Gemmell (this year's series is focussing on *Fratelli Tutti*); monthly Regional Group meetings on Saturday afternoons for prayer and planning; our monthly Book Club; the Creators of Peace group; and Creative Writing workshops guided by Joyce Kornblatt. Joyce will be a welcome guest at the October Book Club session as we have chosen her latest novel, *Mother Tongue*, for our discussion.

While we're on the subject of Zoom meetings, the International Grail is celebrating its centenary with regular gatherings, once or twice a month, around a variety of themes central to our vision and mission - hundreds and hundreds of women on screen from over 20 countries, happy to see and hear one another. The sessions are in three languages. The management team, themselves in four different continents, are doing a masterful job. We are due for an International General Assembly (IGA) this year and that, too, will take the form of a series of Zoom meetings.

At our last Regional Group meeting, we made plans for 2022, expecting COVID restrictions to be lifted by then, but prepared to implement them online if we have to. Early in the year, we will publicise widely, an 8-week program from Lent to Easter to promote the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* offered to the Australian people and Government by the traditional custodians of the land as a just and fruitful way forward for our country. Government action on the proposals of the Statement is long overdue. We look forward to using a well-conceived and praised 8-part study-guide produced by the Public Affairs Commission of the Anglican Church, hoping it will achieve its stated goal, which is also our goal, of enabling people to listen attentively to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to reflect and to act in solidarity.

The Grail in Sydney has been actively engaged in two civil society networks since their inception around 20 years ago. The Faith and Ecology Network (FEN), created by the Columban Missionary Society, builds interfaith collaboration on programs and projects that promote 'ecological consciousness and care for the Earth'. *Deep listening* was the theme of two recent presentations full of beauty and wisdom: the first was a composition of sound recordings set in Australian forests and bushland and the second was titled *Deep Listening to the Great Barrier Reef*,

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) is playing its part in a worldwide campaign to persuade member countries of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to support a proposal (initially from South Africa and India) that would enable

economically poorer countries access to COVID vaccinations for their people at a lower price and more quickly. They have called on the WTO to suspend its rules on patents, until the pandemic crisis is past, and so allow open manufacturing of vaccines. Many countries have announced their support, some refused. A 75% majority is needed. The Australian Government has remained noncommittal in the face of persistent, collaborative campaigning, until recently a delegation from several civil society organisations along with AFTINET met the Minister for Trade who unexpectedly told them that the Government will support the proposal. As soon as they left his office the group made plans to publicise the Minister's statement to secure it in government policy. A gratifying outcome from some exhausting work.

In the last Newsletter Tricia Gemmell, a member of our National Team, wrote of a joint initiative of The Grail in Australia and Women and the Australian Church (WATAC). Every week from March to October when the Catholic Church's historic Plenary Council will open, a Christian woman's reflections on the Sunday Gospel would be podcast. Both Tricia and Elizabeth Lee have spoken in this series; they have also been invited to do so in the Pitt Street Uniting Church. *All the Women Preach reflections, can be accessed on the website, australianwomenpreach.com.au* In this Newsletter Tricia offers an evaluation of the project so far.

On 2nd September, Sonia (Montoya) and George Mrva celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We shall have to wait for the lockdown to be lifted before there can be a party. Meanwhile, we can rejoice with them and their son, Dushan, in our hearts and give thanks for all the gifts the Mrva family has received and shared with others. Two young people, one from Peru and the other from what was then Czechoslovakia, came to Australia and met in Sydney. Little did we know then how they would enrich our lives and society.

Sonia has been the founding convenor of the Book Club until very recently. Two of its members, Martha Mollison and Sue Read, have suffered the loss of their loved and loving partners in marriage, Robert and Philip. We pray God's blessings of courage and peace upon them.

In the last couple of weeks the house next door has been dark at night. The Wakims have sold up and moved out. It feels strange. We wish them well and thank them for their neighbourliness and for Richard's generous help with legal advice.

Finally, we regret that we did not let you know in the previous Newsletter of the death of Denise O'Hara, a dear friend in The Grail through a lifetime. There will be a memorial to Denise in the December issue to mark the first anniversary of her passing into her new life in God.

. Alison Healey

Melbourne

Since the April Newsletter, Victoria has just started its second 'short, sharp lockdown' (our sixth time in lockdown overall). We sympathise with New South Wales as you face an extended period of 'isolation' and southern Queensland as you are also in and out of lockdowns. What a new language we are developing for our 'new normal', let alone the ability to adapt to sudden change!

It is the adaptability which came to the fore in July for our preparations for Joanna Waite's one hundredth birthday, as we were unable to hold a larger party. Liaising with Mary McCormick, Joanna's very dear and supportive friend, we planned a series of small group visits over the week of Joanna's birthday. On the actual birthday, Monday 12th July, Joanna was joined by her four close friends, Mary, Maureen Bounader, Joy Beer and Lorna Junck (*see photo*). Eva Tilley Retirement Home provided a magnificent cake to share with the residents, as did Joanna's friends. That day, Joanna received numerous cards, phone calls and beautiful flowers from family and friends around the country and overseas. Unfortunately, due to lockdown, Joanna's nephew and family had to postpone their holiday and celebration for another time.

On the Saturday before and the Wednesday after the 12th July, Melbourne members celebrated with Joanna. On Saturday, Carol Farmer, Dinny Culican Ward, June Ryan and Andrea Venier set up



photos, decorations, a visitors book and a poster highlighting events of Joanna's life in the Grail. In addition, we prayed together Hildegard of Bingen's Praying at Seventy (or, in this case, One Hundred). Joanna enjoyed the proceedings immensely, including her toast with a nip or two of good Scotch whiskey, followed by afternoon tea. We presented her with a gift of a merino wool poncho. Joanna also videoed a message for our international sisters for the Zoom celebrations of the Grail's centenary on the eve of All Saints. On Wednesday, Ann Niall and Irena Dunn were able to participate with Joanna in a communion service conducted by the pastoral minister. We thank the Eva Tilley staff for assisting us in the various celebrations, in particular, the acting manager who came especially on the Saturday to help set up.

Joanna's week was indeed jam-packed with visitors, including Leo Kelly whose family has had a long association with the Grail and a strong connection with Joanna. The joy and love that Joanna has shared with all of us over these many years has been an inspiration and blessing. We hope we have been able to fill her special birthday with some of the same joy and love.

The Melbourne lectio divina group has attempted to continue fortnightly gatherings via Zoom or in person at Hesed and Irena Dunne's residence. Unfortunately, in recent weeks both Irena and Kathy Wayland have had stints in hospital and have since been recovering at home with family support.

In addition to local Zoom meetings, we have participated in a number of international Zoom meetings to mark our hundredth year. The most recent was an important discussion on whether to initiate the required process for registering the International Grail as an ecumenical lay movement with the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life in Rome. This question has precipitated much serious reflection on our identity as a lay women's movement in the church. Australian members joined the Philippines and Papua New Guinea in an Asia-Pacific Forum where each country's collective response was reported. Our International Council representative, Carol Farmer, distilled our views very well and presented them clearly and thoughtfully. We were able to seek clarification on a number of points from the Working Team who will continue discussions in preparation for the International General Assembly in November.

The garage repairs have been completed and, when out of lockdown, other minor maintenance will be done at Hesed, under Genny Grabau's supervision. We will continue pursuing options for Hesed over the next few months.

We pray for members and their families around the country who are coping with severe illness, as well as all who are suffering in this global pandemic. May we treasure the small blessings along the way.

Andrea Venier

Brisbane

It was wonderful to welcome Mary and Darryl Nelson back to EarthLink at our monthly meeting led by Mary Tinney in New Farm Park with the roses blooming again and Mary looking so well after cancer therapy.

Janet Galos is presenting insights into *The Cosmic Christ* for our

reflection.

Ann Aboud has joined a committee led by Margaret Hounslow raising funds to support people in Ethiopia. She also participates in the Spirituality group in St Lucia, where she lives, volunteers as a pastoral carer at Princess Alexandra Hospital and runs a small psychology practice at West End. Then there's keeping up with her eight grandchildren.

Liz Lancaster is happy to be back in her own home after her illness and looks forward to hosting Grail meetings there again. Kath Connole came to a Grail meeting at Ann's and we look forward to seeing more of her. We are studying Kevin Treston's *Opening Doors* at our monthly meetings and will be planning for our yearly retreat on Bribie Island, COVID permitting.

Judy Brown reports that, lockdowns and restrictions aside, for her the highlights of recent months have been joining the International Grail Zoom meetings along with receiving the accompanying written material. Recently one of these Zoom meetings explored the question whether the International Grail should enter the process for registration with the Dicastery for the Laity in Rome. Carol Farmer's presentation of the Australian response did us proud. While on the subject of Zooms, I am finding that the *Food for the Soul* Zoom each Wednesday evening, organised by the Grail in Sydney, has expanded my horizons¹.

This year the House of Prayer in Townsville is celebrating its 40th birthday and Judy, who was involved in its early development, is planning to be there, COVID permitting, to join the community of men and women spiritually nourished at the House over the years. There she'll be in touch with Consy, Juliette and Helen.

Mary Mennis continues writing a history of Catholic Missions in Papua New Guinea, even during the weeks she was recovering in hospital from a broken pelvis as the result of a car accident. (See Mary's

¹ This program takes the form of a short reading from a sacred text (currently Matthew's Gospel); silent meditation; and then an exchange of insights. Anyone interested should contact the Sydney Grail Centre.

account of this in this newsletter). Mary is also amending the family-connected material in the biography of her father, Sir John Eccles, while a colleague in Germany is reviewing the scientific material.

Over twelve months, Jan O'Donoghue has been attending public hearings of the State Parliamentary Inquiry into aged care, end-of-life and palliative care and voluntary assisted dying. The second reading of the Bill on Voluntary Assisted Dying will take place in the September sittings of the Queensland Parliament. At the hearings, palliative care doctors pleaded with the Government for more funding to enable quality care for those of their patients who are dying. Much more needs to be done and much can be done to alleviate high pain from terminal illness. If the Bill is passed, Catholic Health organisations are concerned that conscientious objection to the provisions that conflict with their beliefs and ethics will be available.

Recently, one of my (Helen's) family, a resident in a Catholic nursing home, was rushed to an emergency department of a large public hospital following a fall. Doctors determined that his symptoms indicated he would not survive his injuries. He was assigned to a palliative / intensive care ward where he had a separate room and a specially constructed palliative care bed. There attentive treatment, oxygen and pain-relieving medication, were provided and family visitors allowed in spite of the strict COVID regulations. Doctors and nursing staff were in attendance and took time to discuss the illness and his level of suffering. Peter, my brother, a member of the Christian Brothers for 65years, was given a most prayerful farewell. The sight and sound of a large group of men singing the *Salve Regina* around his grave was a comfort from the Catholic liturgy that will stay with me.

Helen Jeffcoat and the Brisbane group

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

On the 2021 calendar of Grail celebrations appears not only the centenary of the International Grail but also the 40th anniversary of the beginnings of the Grail in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In 1981, Jill Herbert, Jen Mitchell and Sheila Hawthorn began work in Wewak

in collaboration with the Catholic Education Office in an innovative education project among urban youth. One of the Divine Word missionary priests offered them a house which they gratefully accepted and they moved in. Two local women, Maggie Kajupe, a nurse at the local hospital, and Crescentia Lementi, a high school secretary, accepted the invitation to join them. These five comprised the first 'Grail community' in what is still the Wewak Grail House. Crescentia continues to live there and, over the years, has carried much responsibility for the maintenance of the property, where a large vegetable garden has been well established.

Elizabeth Waken was the first PNG woman to directly involve herself with the Grail in the 1970s while studying nursing in Australia in Mackay, Queensland.

The expansion of the Grail to three other provinces beyond the East Sepik can mainly be attributed to the residents of the Wewak Grail House. The busy schedule of activities generated there contributed substantially to the development of the Grail in PNG: programs for Grail formation and spiritual growth, communal prayer, feast day liturgies, adult literacy classes, arts and crafts including sewing, self-sufficiency fund-raising, hospitality including regular and emergency accommodation for women and girls.

Elizabeth Waken initiated the Grail in Port Moresby (National Capital District). Anna Pilon, after living some years in Wewak, returned to her home on Manus Island and quickly gathered a few women for a Grail introductory program in 1990 and Monica Liumene found an enthusiastic response to establishing a Grail group in East New Britain when she was teaching there.

Many of the 45+ women in the PNG Grail are engaged professionally in health, education, agriculture, community services, administration and their own small enterprises, especially in food-production, together with demanding family responsibilities and their church activities. Some can participate in group activities only occasionally as they are living and working in distant locations, eg, Monica Liumene, Helen Kavo and Angela Bugatar are in three other different

provinces.

After the commitment of nineteen women in Wewak in 1990, PNG was accepted into the International Grail.

Because there are currently pandemic restrictions on large gatherings, there will be a 40th anniversary celebration in each of the four provinces, although their first plan was to gather in Wewak 'where the Grail began'. Both the Wewak and Port Moresby group celebrations will be held on 1st November. We wish them all joyous gatherings and another richly blessed 40 years.

Sheila Hawthorn

Lotu Katolik: Church Missions In Papua New Guinea



Mary (Eccles) Mennis, a member of The Grail in Brisbane, who is writing a history of Catholic missions in Papua New Guinea, reflects:

'Looking back on my life I can see patterns and guidance in the places I lived, in the people I met and interviewed and the mission stories I collected'.

What follows is an elaboration of this statement. It is an account (abridged with Mary's permission) of how she comes to be author of this text on which she is currently working.

In 2019, Brandon Zimmerman invited me to teach a history course at the Bomana Seminary in Port Moresby. I had first met Brandon at the junior seminary near Mt Hagen. Accepting the invitation, I spent some time in preparation, but then Covid-19 intervened and I was unable to go. Instead, I decided to write a text book for the students covering the topics.

I first went to PNG in 1962 as a young teacher and my first posting was to Matupit Island where the first Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had arrived in 1882. Fr Bernard Franke, Parish Priest of Matupit, introduced me to Paulina Ia Dok, his oldest parishioner. Paulina was born in the 1880s and remembered some of the earliest missionaries. I was fascinated by Paulina's many stories and so began a lifelong practice of collecting stories in PNG. It was after interviewing Fr Franke that I wrote my first book, *They came to Matupit*. I married Brian Mennis, a surveyor, in 1964 and our first child, John Bernard, was named after Bernard Franke

When John Bernard was learning to walk, I was asked to tutor a young man, Benedict To Varpin, who was hoping to join the seminary. He needed basic knowledge of Latin, which I had majored in at university. In time, Benedict became a priest and then Bishop of Bereina and then Archbishop of Madang. During a sabbatical leave in 1994 I stayed at the Catholic Mission in Madang and Archbishop Benedict took me everywhere he went on patrol –up to Bundi in the mountains; up the Ramu River by canoe; to Bogia on the north coast and to other inland villages. Wherever he celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation, Bishop Benedict would organise singsing groups to dance into the church and the people came from everywhere attracted by the colourful and spirited ceremonies. My book *Tubuan² and Tabernacle* is about Bishop Benedict and Fr Franke. The title itself is symbolic of what Benedict tried to achieve. For decades the German missionaries had banned the Tubuan saying it was evil and connected to sorcery. Archbishop Benedict and his friend, Archbishop To Paivu, both Tolai men, denied this and succeeded in

² Tubuan: a masked ritual figure which is generally regarded as a prime symbol of Tolai traditional culture.

reversing the ban. Now Tubuans can be seen everywhere in Rabaul.

Yule Island and Bereina were established early by the Sacred Heart Missionaries from Rabaul. While living in Port Moresby in 1980 I made a few trips to Yule Island for holidays where I talked with some of the villagers who spoke of their traditional culture when their ancestors made their unique pots and saw the two-hulled canoes (lagatoi) sailing past on their trading expeditions. At the Yule Island convent, I met the old French Sisters who had given their lives to the mission there.

In 1971, after nine years in Rabaul, Brian and I spent six months in Mt Hagen and while there I met the famous Fr Ross, who was the first missionary in the Western Highlands. He had first travelled to Mt Hagen in 1934 over the mountains with a group of mission helpers. No one had written up his story, so I offered to record his memories on tape. and he agreed. I also interviewed Chief Wamp Wan who met Fr Ross in 1934. He and Chief Ninji Kama gave Fr Ross great support in those early years. Some of the priest's helpers remembered the forty days they walked through the mountains with him. From their stories I was able to make a map of the trek. In 2014, I was delighted when the Rempi and Rebiamul people decided to follow this map and their original route has now become a pilgrimage route. Up to 500 people have made the pilgrimage on special anniversaries, taking several weeks to complete it. The first book I wrote on the Hagen mission was called *Hagen Saga*. Years later, *Rempi to Rebiamul* covers missions in Madang, the Chimbu and the Western Highlands.

Brian and I and our four children lived in Madang for eight years in the 1970s and I made over 100 tapes among the Bel people telling of their traditional culture and spirituality and the development of cargo cults. While in Madang I made many trips to Alexishafen and saw the destruction from the second world war and the many graves in the cemetery.

In 2019, I met Cardinal Sir John Ribat in Port Moresby, who is Bishop Benedict's cousin. The Catholic Church did not make much headway

in Port Moresby until about 1915. This was because the government of this area, previously known as British New Guinea, preferred the London Missionary Society (LMS) to continue their mission activity there.

Vunapope in East New Britain province is the original domain of the Sacred Heart Missionaries although many other congregations of religious brothers and sisters followed. I made two trips to Rabaul in 2018 and was able to go several times to Rakunai Village where Blessed Peter To Rot once lived. The tunnel he built to hide people from the Japanese is still there, now a sacred place. I interviewed several members of his family and heard many anecdotes about him.

The first chapter of this history is about the Catholic missions in Milne Bay and Bougainville. Marist missionaries came to the Trobriand Islands in 1837, and, although this was not successful, they are rightfully given credit for establishing the first mission in New Guinea. Many years later, better prepared, they returned to New Guinea to Bougainville. In the meantime, one of their own, Fr Peter Chanel, was martyred in Fiji and became the first proclaimed Saint of the Pacific.

Madang, Wewak and the Western Highlands were the domain of the missionaries of the Divine Word and the Holy Spirit Sisters. In 1896, they began in Tumleo Island. Years later Alexishafen was established and developed so much it became bigger than Madang town itself. From Alexishafen missions were set up in the highlands. These same missionaries began work in the Aitape area but their numbers were so depleted in the war that the Franciscans were asked to take over. Years ago I had interviewed Fr Ferdinand Parer in Brisbane. He was in the first group of Franciscans to go to Aitape and his stories were full of insights into mission development.

In the Southern Highlands the Franciscan Capuchins established strong missions. Their activities and the efforts of other denominations such as the Lutherans and Methodists, the LMS and the Anglicans have turned Papua New Guinea into a Christian country. It is the spirituality of the people that gives them hope in a

country marred by corruption, poverty and inequality.

There are many people to thank as I write this book. First are all the people I interviewed. Their anecdotes have added colour to the factual history.. Thanks also to Sara Mah and Brandon Zimmerman for their editing of the manuscript.

Mary Mennls

Australian Women Preach Mid-term Evaluation



In the April Newsletter this year, Tricia Gemmell, member of our Australian National Team, wrote of a joint initiative of The Grail in Australia and Women and the Australian Church (WATAC). Every week from March to the Australian Catholic Church's

historic Plenary Council in October (30 weeks in all), a Christian woman's reflections on the Sunday Gospel would be podcast. *All these reflections, those past and those to come, can be accessed on the website, australianwomenpreach.com.au*

Here Tricia offers an evaluation of the project so far.

As I write, our joint WATAC/Grail project, *Australian Women Preach*, has resulted in an archive of 24 podcast sermons. By the time you look, there will be a few more. If nothing else, this archive stands as a testimony to the giftedness of Australian women in breaking open the word of God, and, furthermore, to what the church loses every Sunday in prohibiting these voices from preaching. To put a more positive spin on this, we could ask the question, 'How much richer would our Sunday Masses be if we could hear the gospel proclaimed from a diversity of cultures, backgrounds and lived experiences?'

Data analytics show that around 75% of our listeners are women; and numbers are not as high as we would have hoped. There are several reasons for this. First, and perhaps foremost, it is extremely hard to advertise, given both our limited resources and our limited access to Catholic media. A letter sent to 28 bishops around the country resulted in just one response. Another reason why our audience remains relatively small, however, is the fact that those people most interested are also those least likely to listen to podcasts. However, they are very happy that we actually exist!

Our greatest success would be if the Plenary Council were to seriously consider the subject of lay preaching and seek to change the canon law that currently prohibits it. In the meantime, we will continue the project, at least until the start of the second session of the Plenary in July next year. We are extremely proud of our achievement so far.

Patricia Gemmell, on behalf of the Working Group