



*Here He is. Listen to Him.
He comes from the midst of heaven.
He comes singing and those who are
Here playing their flutes respond.*

Live gladly because of His love.

[Julian of Norwich, 1343 – after 1416]



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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Melbourne

Recent months have indeed been an emotional time as we celebrated the Grail centenary of the International Grail and both rejoiced in the life of our dear Joanna Waite and mourned her death. A celebration of Joanna's life is included in this Newsletter.

With much joy and excitement our 100 years celebration was held via Zoom on October 31st. Consequently, many of our sisters across the globe were able to witness and participate in this occasion of blessing conveyed in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Although it is a challenge when we meet in virtual space and with time constraints, this celebration was inspiring and jubilant. A diversity of voices dynamically created meaningful ritual. Music, symbols, and imagery generated prayerful connection with the breaking of bread as a sign of our unity. And Joanna Waite was with us in her video-recorded message to celebrate this momentous event of The Grail. We were thrilled to see her!

Our International General Assembly (IGA) then officially commenced. It has been an open meeting for observers as well as for International Council (IC) members, delegates, network co-ordinators and work teams- an opportunity which has afforded many Grail members an insight into Grail life internationally. Carol Farmer, as our IC representative, has been busily involved in all aspects of this extensive IGA process which culminated in a final voting session on December 11th.

After a week of wild weather, we were blessed with a perfect spring day for our centenary picnic, held on the actual All Saints feast day, Monday 1st November. Just out of lockdown and still with re-

strictions in place, we celebrated with a smaller group in the open air *outside* Maranoa gardens in North Balwyn - the actual gardens were closed due to storm damage! We used a combination Dutch/Australian theme with orange colours (in honour of our founding Dutch women) amid the native flora. It was wonderful to share a repast and a reflection and be able to toast all Grail women and friends across the generations. The Melbourne women present also sent cards to all Australian members in gratitude for the life of the Grail in our country.

Within days of the centenary, Joanna was farewelling her closest friends and her grand-nephew James, who managed to fly from Sydney to spend the weekend with her. The next night, Joanna peacefully left this world.

We are blessed to have known Joanna and experienced her loving presence. The wonders of modern technology allowed her family and friends around the world to be 'present' at her Requiem and burial. Messages from overseas attest to her kindness, spirit of joy and faithfulness. (The eulogy spoken at her Requiem can be read on p. 8)

With peace and blessings for the Christmas season. May Joanna's fortitude and sense of wonder inspire us in these uncertain times! May we all rejoice in the opportunity to be with loved ones this year.

Andrea Venier and Carol Farmer

Sydney

All year our Regional Grail group has met via Zoom on the second Saturday of the month for prayer and planning. In Noy-

ember and December, some of the COVID-19 restrictions lifted and movement and gathering became freer. It was a delight to be able to be together with friends in the meeting room in 'Avila' for our annual Advent reflections, about which Ruth Crowe writes below. We were also able to celebrate the International Grail's centenary with a festive meal.

Now, however, the fourth variant of the virus, spreading quickly, is already bringing restraints once more. Will 2022 be a kinder year, I wonder? With our wishes to all for a Christmas and New Year full of blessing,

Alison Healey



Ruth writes:

We came together at 'Avila' for two evenings of reflection during Advent. Recalling that, soon after his birth, Jesus became a refugee as his parents fled with him into Egypt, we chose to focus on what is happening for refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

On the first night we listened to the words Simeon spoke to Mary after the birth of Jesus telling her a sword would pierce her heart... and we listened to the story of Omid Masmouli, an Iranian refugee who set himself alight on Nauru in 2016 in despair as a result of seeing no action on his resettlement in Australia. His mother told Australians that the name Omid means 'Hope' but he had found none in

Australia. We heard of Veronica's struggle to settle in our country on a bridging visa and her difficulties as she tries to work to put food on the table for herself and her 3-year-old daughter, Happiness.

And we understood that, so many mothers and fathers of refugees and asylum seekers have their souls pierced as Mary's was as she watched Jesus live out his life and death. We laid a rose on the advent wreath as we remembered their sorrow and grief.

In the second week we heard from two amazing women who spend much of their lives advocating for and supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Nasiba Akram Haidari is founder of *Project Humanity Australia* and Angela Fredericks from Biloela, Queensland, advocate for the Murugappan family from Sri Lanka and member of *Hometobilo*, joined us from her home via zoom. The lives of both these women have been one huge 'YES' as they work to bring love and hope into the lives of refugees from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and several other countries.

We listened to the words of Pope Francis. Challenging us to remember, 'You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him/her as yourself' (Leviticus 19:34), he proposes that our shared response to refugees and asylum seekers can be 'articulated in four responses : to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate' .

We lit candles--- in hope, in defiance, in lament, in prayer, in love, as we prayed:

*for all those people in the world who struggle to find a place they can call home,
for all those who take desperate measures to find safety,
for the laments deep in our hearts that we cannot even find words for,.
and more...*

We are bonded in spirit with everyone who has walked this land, and every other land,

this day and across the centuries. All are part of the same great wholeness. Some of us are settled, others looking for shelter, all of us journeying towards a universal truth that heals and connects. Give us grace to see our own need for refuge so that we may extend a warm greeting to those we meet on the path.

Finally, we offered one another a Sign of Peace, as we recognised the need for our Federal Government and all Australians to open their hearts in care for refugees and asylum seekers.

(For the Planning Team - Terese Sheridan, Kay Hunt, Nour Barcha, Margaret Hetherton)



DENISE O'HARA,

Born in Brisbane 5th March, 1931,
died in Sydney and entered into new life,
18th December 2020

In 1957 at the age of 26, Denise decided to participate in a 3-month residential Christian development program for young women in 'Tay Creggan', the Grail Centre in Melbourne. She had graduated from the University of Queensland and was a secondary school teacher of French. She got a job at Collingwood Boys' High while in Melbourne, which, I imagine, tested her daily. The Grail became part of her life from that time. Denise continued in her teaching profession in Sydney, her last appointment being as a member of the Executive of the Open High School providing distance education to students living in remote areas of New South Wales. There, incidentally, she and Sonia Mrva became working colleagues in the Language Department where Sonia taught Spanish.

Denise's qualities of generous constancy and thoughtful analysis recommended her to Grail members when they sought reliable representation. Over the years, she was:

- NSW delegate to the National Council and member of the Finance Team;
- member of the National Leadership Team;
- Australian delegate to the International General Assembly, 1993
- twice member of an Election Committee administering national and international elections;
- member of the first Archives Working Group.

Denise was an avid reader and would often table and recommend an article or excerpt at our regional group meetings. Her precision made her the perfect proof reader and she performed this task innumerable times as newsletters, bulletins, letters and flyers required her overview. Memorably for me, she and Shirley Collins offered to proofread my doctoral thesis – what greater evidence is there of loyal friendship!

Dear Denise died peacefully in sleep in her apartment. We farewelled her and gave thanks for her life of faithful commitment in a Eucharist in Francis Xavier's church, Lavender Bay, on 14th January 2021, after which she was buried in Brisbane where other family members lie.

A favourite and frequent prayer of Denise's was one of Terresa of Avila's:

May I be at peace.
May my heart remain open.
May I be aware of my true nature.
May I be healed.
May I be a source of healing to others.
May I dwell in the breath of God.

Alison Healey

Brisbane

This is the fourth year that we have had an **annual retreat** at the ToCH house at Bongaree on Bribie Island. We were there over the weekend of October 30 – November 1. The house is spacious, is only a block from the beach and has meeting areas and a large garden. We welcomed several friends and friends of friends who joined us; and some members of the local parish came during the day. Kevin Treston and Janet Galos were our two guest presenters.

Kevin's talk, based on his book, *Sayings for the Soul*, was about meditating with mantras and sacred sayings. 'Now I have put my words in your mouth', (Jeremiah 1:9). Hearing about traditions of prayer in different religions was both interesting and worthwhile.

Janet gave two sessions. The first discussed the importance of the culture in which Celtic Christianity emerged with a particular examination of the prayer, the *Breastplate of St Patrick*. In the second session, we considered some important qualities of monastic spirituality from the late 5th to 8th Centuries. This spirituality can inspire us today. Janet's sessions were illustrated with many pictures of locations of monasteries, burial sites and historic churches in Ireland and Scotland. She had

us all thinking that our next retreat should be a pilgrimage to Ireland led by Janet!

On Saturday afternoon we had a practical session with Helen Jeffcoat learning how to make wax fabric wraps. These can be used, and re-used, to wrap food instead of plastic. Beeswax is easily available; in addition, you need a square of 100% cotton fabric, baking paper and an iron. If everyone does a few small things to reduce waste it will make a big difference. That night we joined the 'Big Grail meeting'. The house didn't have wifi so we used our phones. As a result it seemed a bit 'little'. But the reality of us all meeting at the same time across many locations, with many contributing, was warming and uniting.

Sunday was All Saints Day and the centenary of the Grail's Foundation Day and we remembered our Grail sisters who have gone before us. Jill Herbert had prepared a liturgy which we enacted in the garden. It began with Joyce Johnson Rouse' song, *Standing on the Shoulders*.

I am standing on the shoulders of the one who came before me.

I am stronger for their courage, I am wiser for their words.

I am lifted by their longing for a fair and brighter future.

I am grateful for their visions, for their toiling on this earth.

We are a small group with many personal challenges. Who knows what next year will hold, but we will work together with the Grail vision in our hearts.

Judy Brown recently took the opportunity of a **visit to far North Queensland** for a family function to contact nearby Grail women there and also promote the third edition of the Grail's Personal Journal for prisoners. She flew direct to Cairns and then made her way more slowly back south.

For the first time, 1000 copies of the Journal are being given freely to prisoners in Queensland correctional centres through Judy Norris, who has oversight of the prison ministry of the Catholic Church in Queensland. Judy Brown has accepted responsibility for selling a matching 1,000 to fund those gifts. For sales and orders, please contact Judy (0407 580 174) or Elizabeth Lancaster (0407 738 582).

In both Cairns and Townsville Judy introduced the Journal to Prison Chaplaincy coordinators, giving them a sample copy, as well as a Grail brochure. Rev. Karen Allen of the Anglican church in Atherton is keen to access the journals. All those Judy met with gave their support to the Journal project and bought or ordered copies, including the Coordinator of the Townsville House of Prayer.

Judy and her niece had a delightful lunch at Roberta and Paul Michna's incredible rain forest hide-away. We have just heard that Roberta's mother in Gympie who has been very ill has died. We send our deepest sympathy to Roberta and the family.

Margaret Tranter was also at the lunch, come from her home on the Atherton Tableland. Margaret had exciting news that, earlier in the year, the Street Naming Authority in Canberra asked permission to name a street after her parents, Henry and Elaine Tranter, to honour their contribution to the community and agriculture, especially on the Atherton Tableland. Grail women who worked in St Raphael's College, Townsville, and appreciated greatly the Tranters' unfailing hospitality, are delighted at this memorial of them. Margaret's daughter and young family, including a very young baby, are currently staying with her in Milla Milla, so life is very full for them both.

In Townsville, Judy, Helen Morlin and Consy Sakaria 'had a cuppa' at the House of Prayer. Both women are really busy, with family needs very much to the fore. Judy later met also with Joan Neal, who lived in the first Grail house in Townsville for university undergraduates.

From our families

Reto Jenatsch, Maggie's husband, will shortly retire from his position at St William's Parish. We wish him health and happiness.

Josephine Vidler, Jill and Pat's daughter, was admitted as a lawyer this week. It was Jill's god-daughter, Nicole Cullen, who moved Josephine's acceptance. Our congratulations and best wishes to Jo for whom this was the culmination of 6-7 years of tertiary study and training.

Ailsa Paterson, Helen Jeffcoat's daughter, will move to Mackay next year. to teach in MacKillop Primary School at Andergrove.

Helen Jeffcoat, Judy Brown, Ann Aboud

TO JOANNA (EILEEN) WAITE

(born in London 12th July, 1921; died in Melbourne to a new life 9 November, 2021)



*God of all goodness, grant unto us
to desire ardently, to seek wisely,
to know surely and to accomplish faithfully
Your holy will.*

Julian of Norwich

It is clear that Joanna had the passion and idealism of youth and a searching to be part of something that was both life-affirming and faith-centred. She met the five Dutch Grail women who arrived in Sydney in 1936 when she was 15 years old, not many years after her own family had emigrated from London. Joanna was attracted to what she found in the Grail - using her words, 'the aliveness of their faith, the centrality of the liturgy, the spirit of Christian joy and sacrifice' and she found 'a revolutionary quality in the Grail'. It was 'a pioneer in the youth movement' and 'brought people together in a variety of cultural expressions of a Christian humanism that encompassed personal prayer, liturgy, ecumenism, the arts – music, literature, drama, dance and crafts - continuing adult education and personal growth' In 1939, variously learning from Judith Bowman, Frances van der Schott and Brigid Huizinga, Joanna began a preparation for making a life-time dedication in the Grail in 1942, *this* year celebrating her 79th year in our lay women's movement. Times change and the Spirit is moving through time and change and for this Joanna has always thanked God.

Joanna's life of dedication, coupled with her personal qualities, led to fruitful experiences for her and for those she met. Joanna was patient and calming, yet energetic and determined. She was open and attentive to others' needs; had a welcoming manner and made people feel valued. Many of us know and appreciate that attentiveness: her grip of the hand, her direct look in the eye, and her 'Now, how are you, dear?' leading to a thoughtful chat.

Joanna's life of service included:

- A program of in-home support for families in need in Brisbane;
- The Family Apostolate Movement in several areas of Sydney;
- Christian formation of married couples also in Melbourne;
- The establishment with Pat Sheeran of the Grail Centre in Mackay, Queensland;
- Administration of the Grail Adult Education Program, Melbourne;
- State Organizer of the Home Tutor Scheme, a government migrant language-learning program, Victoria;
- Three years with the Grail in South Africa, where, again, she worked among married couples and families offering programs of Christian development.

Joanna had an affinity with young mothers, their partners, young adults and children and provided love and support for them. As one woman put it, 'she seemed to know what young mothers needed'. Many women and their partners became life-long friends with Joanna. Her time with them strengthened their faith and encouraged many women to develop their skills,

pursue their education and become leaders themselves of programs and projects in the Grail, in their parishes and in other educational institutions.

Joanna spent the last ten years of her life in the Eva Tilley Retirement Centre in North Balwyn. Her mind continued to be sharp and reflective. *The Age* newspaper was delivered every morning, her Gospels and prayer books lay on the bedside table, her classical music CDs and favourite DVDs were at hand to inspire and amuse. She made frequent phone-calls to family, friends and Grail members, never forgetting significant dates in their lives, and received calls in return.

We are thankful for the ever-present love and care of Mary McCormick and Joy Beer, who have been dear friends for over fifty years. Their presence and kindness has been a great comfort to Joanna. It was also a blessing that she could receive visits from her grand-nephew, James, and his family from Sydney. She delighted in their company. And we are grateful for the care and respect accorded Joanna by all of the Eva Tilley staff, the St Vincent's palliative care team and her spiritual supports over many years, Frs Werner Utri and John Salvano.

From her youth to her latter years, Joanna's delight in life, her faith and her appreciation and gratitude for even the smallest things that she always saw as blessings, are an inspiration to us. Although her extended life sometimes became a burden from which she wanted release, she still had a sparkle in her eye and the ability to exude joy - 'Wonderful! Wonderful!' she would respond.

In this special year of her 100th birthday and the 100th anniversary of the Grail movement, it is fitting that Joanna be finally in joy with her God.

Andrea Vernier and Dinny Culican Ward, Eulogy at Joanna's Requiem

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high,
Who ordered all things mightily,
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease,
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

