



Photo by Mike Labrum on Unsplash

*God of love and peace, we pray at this time for our human family,
Especially, for those suffering in war.*

We pray especially for the many women and children who are dying in such numbers.

Mercy us all O God, soften the hearts of those who hate and fight each other.

Enlighten us, show each of us the ways to bring peace and harmony to our world.

~~~~~

*'Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it towards others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world.'*

***Etty Hillesum***

## CONTENTS

|                                                                                                |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>News from here and there</b>                                                                | <b>3 - 6</b> |
| Brisbane<br>Sydney<br>Melbourne                                                                |              |
| <b>Reflecting on her experience of the 16<sup>th</sup> General Synod</b><br>Cristina Dos Anjos | <b>6-7</b>   |
| <b>The value of being part of a small local faith/Christian community</b>                      | <b>7-9</b>   |
| <b>Meditation and Music from Taizé</b><br>Nour Barcha                                          | <b>9-10</b>  |
| <b>Contemplative Photography</b><br>Elizabeth Lee                                              | <b>10-11</b> |
| <b>WATAC Conference and PreachFest 2023</b><br>Tricia Gemmell                                  | <b>11-12</b> |

## 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](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)

Available by email or by post if necessary.

### ***Pacific Outlook Bulletin***

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

To receive a free copy, contact [info@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)

Available by email or by post if necessary.

## ADDRESSES

The Grail Centre  
22 McHatton Street  
North Sydney NSW 2060.  
Tel. 61 2 – 9955 3053  
[admin@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@grailaustralia.org.au)

Brisbane Grail  
c/- Jill Herbert  
14 Carawatha Avenue  
Ferny Hills QLD 4055 (Brisbane)  
[vidler\\_herbert@aapt.net.au](mailto:vidler_herbert@aapt.net.au)

Contact for The Grail Melbourne and Grail members North Queensland  
[admin@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@grailaustralia.org.au)

Website [www.grailaustralia.org.au](http://www.grailaustralia.org.au)

Editor: Ruth Crowe

## NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

### Brisbane News

Greetings. May the Blessings, Joy and Peace of Advent fill your hearts. While there are many happenings in the world at the moment to bring sorrow, I hope the season of Advent brings each of us hope. Many events have happened in Brisbane these last few months. The spare seat when we gather in Brisbane reminds us of Elizabeth Lancaster who we dearly miss. We met up with Liz's sister and brother-in-law, Anne and Trevor, when they were here to begin the process of preparing Liz's house for sale. We shared our fond memories of Liz.

Judy Brown has experienced sorrow recently with the loss of her sister, Wendy. Judy travelled to Cloncurry for her funeral, held in the Shire Hall as the church was too small. Fr Mick Lowcock officiated at Wendy's funeral. Fr Mick is known to many in the Grail.

Ann Aboud and Mary and Darryl Nelson have continued to support midwives in Ethiopia through Margaret Hounslow's group. They have attended a Soup Lunch, a theatre production of *My family and other Animals* and a musical event, *The Waltz and Smaltz piano duo*. Mary and Darryl have also given a reflection on Cosmogogenesis at Earthlink, a group some Grail women have been involved with in Brisbane.

Judy Brown has recently organised two Spirituality reflections. Sr Mary Franzman presented an online reflection, *The Paschal Mystery*. It was thought provoking and inspiring. Racy Espino (who provides admin assistance and inspiration to the Brisbane Grail) and Vicki Scalan from *Heads to Hearts* asked Mary to present her talk to the Kedron Parish. This was very well attended. Kevin Treston prepared a

written reflection, titled *Gracing the Everyday*.



Most of our group visited Jan O'Donoghue at Canossa Nursing Services recently. Jan always has plenty to contribute to the conversation, be it politics, the church or Spirituality. As always, we enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea but do miss the wonderful cakes she used to bring along to every meeting!

We have also enjoyed a superb lunch hosted by Jay Rosales Scoullar and her husband, Dudley. Jay provided a variety of dishes, including some traditional Filipino dishes. We welcomed Patricia Cummins who travelled from Tweed heads to join us. We changed our Retreat location this year from the seaside at Bribie Island to the Villa Maria Spirituality Centre in Fortitude Valley. Judy and Racy had put



together an inspiring line up of speakers, including Roberta Michna, a North

Queensland Grail member. Roberta gave us many insights into the physical and spiritual life of the North Queensland rain forest, where they live.

Some of our members have joyful news to share. Mary and Darryl Nelson's daughter, Monique got engaged while on a recent overseas holiday. We wish Monique and Brandon Petterson much happiness. Helen Jeffcoat and Brian Paterson have welcomed their first grandchild. Their daughter, Ailsa, and her husband, Nathan, have a new baby son, Hugo Sievers, born on the 30<sup>th</sup> October. Congratulations Ailsa, Nathan and Hugo. And, Dom Vidler has returned safely from his amazing time working at the Australian Base in Antarctica!

***Ann Aboud, Jill Herbert and Judy Brown***

## **Sydney News**

With our Indigenous brothers and sisters, we lament the outcome of the Referendum on the 'Voice' which took place on 14 October. Lest we forget them in the midst of so much chaos and suffering happening in so many parts of the world at the moment. We will continue to listen to Indigenous leaders and walk with them into the future as they continue to make plans for future action that will bring justice and a 'fuller life' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and indeed, all Australians.

On Saturday, 9 September, we held a workshop at Avila on 'How to have constructive conversations in challenging situations', led by Shoshana Faire from Creators of Peace. I think all those who attended took time out to recoup their energies and perspective after so much interaction with individuals and groups who were trying to have informal conversations around the pros and cons regarding the 'Voice'. Shoshana's

sensitivity to and professional experience in this area certainly provided us with some healing and energy to keep moving towards our goal of respectful listening, quietly and deeply, in our daily lives.

Our final Reflection morning for 2023 took place on Tuesday, 28 November. The group, which has met monthly throughout the year, found so much inspiration from reading and discussing the book, *Teilhard de Chardin on the Gospel: the message of Jesus for an evolutionary world* by Louis Savary, that we will continue this focus into 2024. We look forward to the enriching experience.

Kate Scholl continues her powerful work teaching people how to Journal as part of their spiritual practice. We enjoyed hosting Kate and her group over the last weekend of October.

We had two working bees on the Grail Archives in November removing every staple and metal clip from all files and publications and replacing each one with a plastic clip! We will need a few more working bees next year as we prepare the archives for their new home in the old Franciscan Friary in Box Hill. It's tedious work, but although we have promised not to read everything, it is fun to look at old photos and letters that remind us of so many women who worked very hard to get the Grail up and running in Australia, particularly during and after World War 2.

Our Book Group has had another enjoyable year finishing with our usual *Thanksgiving* meal together. The books we are looking to read during 2024 include: *Songs for the Dead and the Living* described in reviews as 'a coming-of-age tale played out across generations and continents, from Palestine to Australia. Through stunning prose, acclaimed writer and human-rights activist Sara M Saleh offers a breathtaking portrait of the fragilities and flaws of family in the wake of war, and the love it takes to overcome

great loss'; *Wifedom* by Anna Funder and *Chai Time at Cinnamon Gardens* by Shankari Chandran, winner of this year's Miles Franklin Award.

Our best wishes to the grandmothers and great grandmother who have this year welcomed newborns into their family: Anne Day, Christian Reynolds, Terese Sheridan, Patricia Gemmell and Helen Jeffcott (Brisbane). May blessings flow always.

The Grail women in Sydney also send their congratulations and joyful good wishes to our sister and Grail member, Lauren Lockwood Porter, who was recently ordained a Deacon in the Anglican Church. See the Melbourne news below.

We wish each and every one of you and your families and friends the special gifts of Christmas, Peace, Hope and Joy.

***Ruth Crowe***

## **Melbourne News**

Despite, and perhaps because of, this incredible year of change, there is much to be grateful for in the Melbourne group. Indeed, we have been adapting 'spaces' along with managing many family and health concerns this year, which makes meeting together especially important.

With the successful sale of the Grail unit, we have been alternating home venues for our fortnightly lectio gathering which has afforded us the opportunity to share our own 'spaces' with our Grail community. Genny, Ann, Kathy and Andrea have so far welcomed the group. We have been reflecting on texts from *In Her Voice* as well as on materials that 'crop up' regarding the synod or from Grail sources. We have also spent time reflecting on the Grail survey. We

celebrated November 1st with a reflection combining prayers from the IT and some of our own. We especially remembered Joanna Waite's anniversary at this time.

We are also grateful that some familiar faces have been able to join us this year – Mary McCormick, and Colette Horvath and her husband, Mark. It has been a delight to have their presence and their insightful reflections, not to mention their entertaining conversation over lunch. We congratulate Mary who has been elected co convener of the Augustinian Lay movement in Australia. We hope to continue growing friendships, sharing ideas, and supporting one another's activities.

The recent zoom presented by Sr Mary Franzmann and organised by the National Team was a great initiative. We appreciated the chance to spend time with members across the country and refresh our understandings on sacramentality.

Our last gathering for 2023 will be at Kathy's for an Advent reflection and celebration in gratitude for the communion we share. Our thoughts will be with all those struggling to find hope, peace and justice in this turbulent time.



WONDERFUL NEWS we have from our group is that Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> November was a day of joy and celebration for Lauren Lockwood-Porter, her husband Mark, young daughter Hattie, their parents and family members and friends. Lauren was



ordained deacon in St Paul's Anglican Church, Bendigo. Lauren, a Quaker, joined the Grail some years ago after first meeting three Sydney members at a study weekend arranged by *Pace Bene Australia*, an organisation promoting the spirituality and practice of active non-violence. After marrying in the Society of Friends Meeting House in Sydney, Lauren and Mark moved to Melbourne and lived in the Grail unit in North Balwyn where they were welcomed into the Melbourne Grail community. After Lauren and Mark found their home in the Dandenongs, their daughter Hattie was born, and Lauren and Mark developed a commitment to the local Anglican church which offered them friendship and community. Lauren's professional work since completing university studies has been in serving people's needs for personal and social development and guidance. With the support of the Anglican community, the family soon moved to Bendigo for work and so that Lauren could begin further studies. Now, she has enriched her capacities for this with the biblical, theological and spiritual studies and practice leading to her ordination.

We pray God's abundant blessings on her and Mark and Hattie and on all that the future may bring them.

*With blessings to all over this Christmas season!*

*Andrea Venier*



~~~~~

Cristina Dos Anjos, Brazilian Grail member and Director of Caritas in Brazil, was invited by Pope Frances to be part of the 16th General Assembly of the Synod held in Rome from 29 September – 29 October. She was one of a small group of lay delegates who had the right to speak and vote during the Synod.



The participation of women in this synod, who throughout history have been listeners, advisors or experts, took on a different character! It is the desire of this Pope that women can speak and be heard and have the right to vote at important meetings of the Church. Over the past 10 years, Pope Francis has appointed women, lay and religious, to important positions in the Vatican, always demonstrating his position on female participation in the Church.

As a black, lay woman, my place of speaking arises from spaces of experience and strengthening the social dimension of evangelization, based on the Grail, *Cáritas Brasileira*, and in conjunction with other

organizations. I see that being a Church is above all working for those who suffer; without forgetting the condition of women in the Church and in society. In this sense, I joined the Brazilian and Latin American delegation, with this specific look at my identity, but also at this community place, from which I experience my faith.

I bring with me so many other cries; women, especially black women, indigenous people, migrants, fishermen, riverside dwellers, homeless people, waste pickers, LGBTQI+ youth. Being a Church in today's reality means radically welcoming these individuals who challenge us to see the face of Jesus Christ in each one of them. The hope that permeates this event is that the Church must increasingly seek to assume a Christian commitment and always from the perspective of the common good and of those most impoverished and wronged.

The certainty that accompanies me is that structural changes must happen in our church so that synodality can actually be exercised. It is not yet possible to have the real dimension of the challenges and opportunities of this participation in the synod, but I feel driven by the words of Pope Francis hoping that 'this Synod will be a time inhabited by the Spirit! For it is the Spirit that we need, the ever new breath of God, which frees us from all closure, revives what is dead, loosens the chains and spreads joy'.

May we live intensely this ongoing beautiful, important and challenging experience, believing that the feminine spirit of God, *Ruah*, will be with us and in us!

Maria Cristina dos Anjos

The Value of being part of a small, local faith/Christian community around Sydney

***Laudato Si'* in Action IN THE PARISH**

I am passionate about *Laudato Si'* and last year invited people in my parish to begin to meet around this theme.

Our monthly meetings start with *lectio divina* (of course!) – silent reading and reflection on a text, often from *Laudato Si'*, followed by sharing. As for the meeting part, I have tried to make that as synodal as possible, given all that we have learned about synodality in recent years. In 2022 we worked on an audit of the parish (provided by Catholic Earthcare) and discerned a modest parish plan. In 2023 we began to implement some of our goals.

We are only a small group of around 10 people, but we are proud of our achievements in 2023. Apart from meeting regularly, we produce an electronic newsletter called *Like a Mustard Seed*, to promote *Laudato Si'* and various events and activities. It goes out about once every two months. To celebrate the Season of Creation in September we offered a screening of *The Letter*, a challenging documentary about Pope Francis and *Laudato Si'*. About 25 people came and there was animated conversation over supper.

We also carried out nine rubbish cleanups this year. On the first Saturday of the month, after 9am Mass, some of us go out for an hour to collect rubbish in the streets near the church. Our goal is to reduce the amount of plastic going into local waterways, but we have discovered that our action is also a positive witness and sometimes a means of engagement with people who are interested in what we are doing.

We have become a cohesive and very supportive community to one another, and we seem to be attracting some interest. Our plans for 2024 are to continue what we have been doing, as well as tackle a few extra goals. Looking back on our first two years, I can say that this group is a source of energy, hope and joy for all of us.

Tricia Gemmell

Bundeena House

During the Covid Lockdown time Bill and I were looking for connection with our faith community – we set up a Sunday morning Zoom with some friends from the local church we had usually attended – but this only happened once as there was no great interest from others in continuing to connect this way – some were watching the Sunday morning Mass zooms from the larger parish church – we did not find that so good for us. Subsequently we learned about the regular Sunday morning Zoom sessions with the locals who were part of the Bundeena House worshipping group, and we were invited to join in. That was the beginning of our regular participation in this faith community. From the Bundeena House Christian Community website:

‘Bundeena House Christian Community is a group of people who have a living relationship with Jesus Christ and are committed to living out the values and mission He embodied during his life on earth. We are a gathering of people who desire to engage with the world around us both locally and globally.

We meet at Bundeena House each Sunday for a church gathering, and at other times during the week. We offer the hospitality of Bundeena House to people such as refugees, families needing time out or others in need of refreshment and renewal.’

For us, joining Bundeena House has been very nourishing – of our faith and worship, and of friendships. We have taken our turn to lead the Sunday morning liturgy on several occasions, and it was a real blessing to be able to celebrate Bill’s life with this community and our family and friends when Bill passed away in August this year.

Frances Warner

David’s Place

David’s Place began twenty years ago as an inner city community. It is a community for all religions, for all racial and all social backgrounds where people are invited to share their deeper life experiences and pray together. The community was created by bringing people together from the well off end of town with those who are marginalised and often living a life of struggle. The focus of this community is finding a space whereby no matter where people are in life, they can be vulnerable and open together and can share a spirituality through the Gospels, through prayer, and through silence and contemplation. The community discovers that they have much in common.

There is an opportunity three times a week for prayer and reflection, followed by cake and coffee, and casual meetings other days in cafes. The inner-city people are picked up by bus and driven to the location. A big part of David’s Place is celebrating birthdays, and many events like picnics and outings are an ongoing part of the life of the community.

Personally, I have been enriched and humbled by the experience of spending time with the people in David's Place and amongst many gifts has been a man called Davo. Davo and I speak weekly on the phone and with the help of David's Place Davo has produced two books of poetry and a book on his life.

Terese Sheridan



Meditation and Music from Taizé



The Taizé Community is an ecumenical Christian monastic fraternity in Taizé, Saône-et-Loire, Burgundy, France. It began in 1940 and today there is a community of more than one hundred brothers from Catholic and Protestant traditions, from about thirty countries. Their vision is to provide a simple and beautiful space where young people are invited to come to spend time together in their search for communion with God through community prayer, song, silence, personal reflection and sharing. The music they have created is used and appreciated worldwide. Praying for Peace in our world is also a focus.

Recently, I was contemplating how to invite the youth to a more contemplative way of being.

Taizé came to my heart. I had experienced Taizé community in France when I was thirty-one, enriching my prayer life.

I had a conversation with the Parish priest at Terrigal, on the Central Coast, Fr Vince and he was intrigued with the idea. One month later I noticed a Taizé event was advertised in the Kincumber Parish Bulletin. What a wonderful coincidence!! I attended the Taizé event at Kincumber Parish. The live choir and musicians took the Taizé experience to a higher level! I met the organiser and invited her to come to the Terrigal Parish and the Taizé journey ignited from there!

Taizé meditation and Eucharistic Adoration was held at Terrigal Parish in November and forty-one people attended. It was a night of peaceful prayers and a heart filled gathering. We Prayed for Peace especially in Gaza and Ukraine.

Then, friends from Sydney expressed interest. With Christmas coming I decided to organise **an Advent Taizé**. Fr Michael Whelan, Parish Priest at St Patrick's Church Hill in the city was delighted with the idea. *A series of Taizé music, prayer and meditation is being held in the crypt of St Patrick's Church Hill, 20 Grosvenor St, The Rocks during Advent on*

Thursday evenings at 7p.m. from 30 November – 21 December. Thirteen people attended the first evening. It was beautiful. We prayed for peace in the world.

We thank the Kincumber Parish for their generosity in sharing their beautiful Taizé icons. The Terrigal Parish for Sharing their colourful material and candle holders. I thank my friend Stephanie Hall for bringing the Taizé cross from the Central coast to Sydney. In 2024, Taizé will continue across multiple parishes on the Central Coast involving the Music departments from the Catholic schools so the youth will make it their own.

We thank God for the gift of community and music connecting us with our deepest self and each other. We pray that the peace we experience during Taizé meditation will spread peace to our troubled war-torn world.

Nour Barcha



Photo Elizabeth Lee

I wonder...

What would happen if we brought contemplative photography into conversation with the Gospel infancy narratives and other Sacred Texts? This is what I invited seven participants of a recent retreat I facilitated at St Joseph's Spirituality Centre, Kincumber, to do. And maybe you would like to respond to the same invitation.

Each day commenced with a time of *lectio divina* with the selected sacred text. Then, I offered one or two photographic invitations to respond to over the following hours before gathering later in the day to reflect on our experiences, sharing images, feelings and insights in small groups. We concluded our time with an Examen, song and blessing. The beautiful

grounds and waterside setting of St Joseph's and the variety of weather conditions offered an ideal and ever-changing environment.

Contemplative photography is seeing and photographing the world in fresh ways, to reveal the richness and beauty that is normally hidden from view. Instead of emphasizing subject matter or the technical aspects of photography, the contemplative approach invites one to see clearly, and create images based on fresh perceptions.

Christine Valtner Paintner's words strongly resonate with me. "Photography has always been a way for me to see more deeply, but my awareness of how this was an experience of prayer and often an encounter with the sacred presence emerged over time... I began to see photography as a way to slow down and gaze deeply, noticing things I miss in my rushed life. ... It became a tool for deeper vision, supporting and enlivening contemplative seeing."

How can we bring contemplative photography into conversation with the Gospel infancy narratives and other Sacred Texts.

Scripture 6: Meister Eckhart

"We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of Man is begotten in us."

You are made in the image and likeness of God. And like Mary, you are the Theotokos, the God-bearer.

Photographic Invitation 6: Self Portrait

In revealing ourselves through our photographs, there is often a great sense of vulnerability. Yet in some sense, all the photos you receive are self-portraits, as they each reveal something about you and what moves you.

Invitation A: A self-portrait without photographing yourself as the subject. The image is a metaphor, symbol, allusion or symbol of you or resonates deeply with who you understand yourself to be.

Invitation B: Creatively photograph yourself without necessarily photographing a classic portrait of your face. Consider playing with shadows, reflections in mirrors, windows or water. You might photograph a part of your body or an item that belongs to you.

How is it for you to see yourself as the bearer of the Divine image?

Elizabeth Lee

~~~~~

## **WATAC Conference and PreachFest 2023**



Australian Collaborators in Feminist Theologies joined with WATAC to present a wonderfully challenging conference in Melbourne in early October. My reason for being there was to present a brief history of Australian Women Preach (AWP), on a panel with Tracy McEwan and three other women who had preached on the podcast. 'Tending to Stories' was the title of the conference. Of particular interest to Grail women would be the Janette Gray Memorial

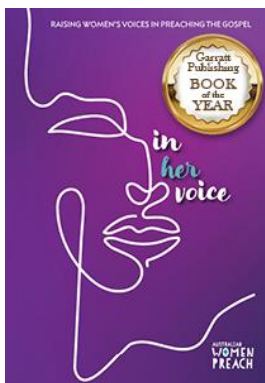
Lecture given by Rev Dr Cathie Lambert, who has preached for AWP. The title of her talk, “When Stories Collide: A Relationship Between Women Centuries Apart,” was the subject of her PhD thesis. Cathie took the writings of three mediaeval Beguine women, Marguerite Porete, Mechtilde of Magdeburg and Hadewijch of Brabant, and introduced them to a group of contemporary women who identify as being on the margins of their church communities. She wanted to explore how these three women mystics might resonate with her chosen group.

The contemporary group of women valued the courage, authenticity and sense of inner authority that the mystics displayed, as well as their freedom in today’s world in developing their own faith and beliefs and expressing them in their writings.

A few weeks later I attended the three-day conference, PreachFest2023. I heard some excellent sermons, as well as interesting talks on how to preach well. Amy-Jill Levine, distinguished Jewish New Testament scholar, looked at how easily anti-Semitism can find its way into preaching when we don’t understand enough about first century Judaism. Stan Grant’s keynote address on the power of words held us all in thrall.

While I felt keenly the current prohibition on Catholic lay people to preach at Mass, PreachFest coincided with the release of the synthesis report from the Synod on Synodality held in Rome in October. To my surprise, lay preaching must have been a topic of discussion. There is hope in paragraph 8 (n): “We need more creativity in establishing ministries according to the needs of local churches...One can think of further expanding responsibilities assigned to the existing ministry of lector...This could become a fuller ministry of the Word of God, which, in appropriate contexts, could also include preaching.” Amen to that.

### ***Tricia Gemmell***



*In Her Voice* has won the title of Garratt Publishing’s Book of the Year. It is described by the publishers as ‘a unique Australian book that showcases the often unheard voices of Christian women. It is powerful and ground-breaking.’

Congratulations to Tricia Gemmell, Tracy McEwan and the team involved in Australian Women Preach and the publication of *In Her Voice*. Thanks to WATAC and the Grail in Australia for supporting this inspiring project.

***48<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Grail in the Philippines.*** We send congratulations and love to our Grail sisters in the Philippines on the 48<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Grail’s beginnings there. May many blessings continue to flow on each of you and your work, which includes projects with the kindergartens and women working in agriculture.

And best wishes and blessings to our Grail women in **Papua New Guinea** who are holding their National Assembly in Port Moresby from 16-22 December.

