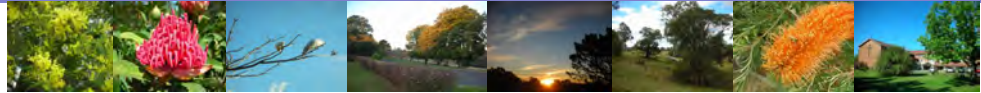


# Stepping Stones



ST JOSEPH'S CENTRE FOR REFLECTIVE LIVING

Volume 1, Issue 1 Summer



## Editorial—Annie Bond rsj Centre Director

It is with pleasure that we welcome you to our first Newsletter "Stepping Stones." It is our hope that we will publish this Newsletter to mark each of the seasons, Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring.

This year has been a particularly busy year for the Centre as 11,848 guests have passed through our doors. Some of these came for a day while others spent longer periods of time with us. Each person and group in their own unique way has abundantly graced this Centre. 2008 has also been a time of transition and change as Patricia Stevenson rsj completed six years as the Director of St Joseph's Centre for Reflective Living. Patricia has returned to New Zealand to continue ministry there. As the new Director I

wish to thank Patricia for the vision she had for St Joseph's and the way in which she guided the Leadership Team, Colleen O'Sullivan rsj, Dianne Overton and Christine Klaricich, and Staff towards fulfilling this vision. It is my sincere hope that, together with the Leadership Team I will be faithful to and continue to build on this vision.

At present St Joseph's is a collage of beauty. The rains have come, life in all its beauty and fullness is visible around us.

As I once again enjoy the intense light of our Summer sun and bask in its warmth I also hunger a little for the dark and cold of my past three Christmases spent in Chicago. I am aware of the impact that our environment can have on our

understanding of various Christian celebrations. Having celebrating Christmas in both the hemispheres I have been reflecting on the predominant image we hold for this celebration, "the Light coming into our darkened world." How do we do this in the presence of so much brilliant light? It seems to me that while the people of the northern hemisphere very clearly experience what it means to "wait in expectant hope" we in the southern hemisphere in a sense experience the fruit of this waiting—we know in our whole being that the "Light has indeed come into our world." Perhaps we in the southern hemisphere are being called to embrace anew the challenge to live in hope. May the blessing of this Christmas Season and the New Year be that we as individuals and a nation continue to grow into being people of hope.

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## Sisters of The Sacred Heart, Bangkok Visit St Joseph's Centre.



"Sawaadeekal!" "Good morning!" On 2nd November, 2008 these words came haltingly from our mouths as St Josephs welcomed 19 Sisters from Thailand for a time of renewal. As the Sisters had indicated some of the topics they wanted to explore during this time Lianella Girardi rsj and I set about designing a programme for them. Each day was a blend of input, discussion, reflection, integration, prayer and relaxation. One of the songs they embraced was "Just To Be Is A Blessing. Being here also meant that Sydney and its environs needed to be explored. Each week we set off "to see the sights." The Blue

Mountains echoed with Thai voices and Port Stephens resounded with screeches of both joy and terror as the Sisters, Lianella and I "surfed" the sand dunes. We also visited Parramatta Cathedral, Mary MacKillop Place, Featherdale Park, and the many other points of interest.

As the time for the Sisters to return to Thailand drew near they treated us to an experience of their culture through song, dance and photography. That night we enjoyed the company of the Presenters who had journeyed with the Sisters as well as our Novices and other Thai friends. The concluding ritual on Saturday 29th November included the planting of a Mary MacKillop Callistemon and sunflowers. A plaque, in Thai and English, will be placed nearby to mark the Sisters presence with us. Despite the unrest in Bangkok the Sisters who mostly minister in Schools, as administrators, and in Parishes, were able to return to Thailand on Sunday 30th November. They assure us that they will return with another group of Sisters in 2010. It was a privilege and a blessing to journey with the Sisters and all of us at St Josephs look forward to their return. Please keep the Sisters and their country in your prayers. Annie & Lianella



## Stepping Stones



New Voices Participants  
2008

### “New Voices” Sabbatical

“New Voices” is the name given to a six-week sabbatical for religious and lay men and women who are 60+.

The ten women from New Zealand and Australia in the programme during 2008 brought with them a great vitality and shared their “new” and ‘old’ voices with each other generously.

The programme was enriched by the people who came to share their expertise with the group. Visiting lecturers discussed leader-

ship, the gift of aging, scripture, spirituality, ministry and self-awareness.

The group was also offered a variety of cultural and social experiences. Trips to the Blue Mountains, lunch on the Nepean Belle, that wonderful old paddle steamer, and a performance of “Little Women” at the Seymour Centre as well as art and craft times were part of the experience.

Some of Sydney’s religious icons were also visited in-

cluding the very modern St Patrick’s Cathedral and Mary MacKillop Place. These visits allowed the group to touch into Sydney’s Catholic roots.

The group brought much to St. Joseph’s during their stay. We remember their time with us with joy.

*Colleen*



AN AREA  
REVITALIZED:  
THE GROTTA  
OFFERS A  
NEW  
REFLECTIVE  
SPACE

### The Grotto Transformed

In 2007 John Finocchiaro completed the designing and building of the labyrinth near the old grotto area. This year John is again working his magic on the reconstruction of the grotto and the surrounding area.

The original grotto was constructed by the novices in the late 1950’s and was a focal point for the Christmas celebrations in that period as

the traditional Christmas crib was set up in the grotto.

Over the years and with the change in numbers and relocation of the novitiate the grotto gradually fell into disrepair but now it is being given new life.

When the project is completed the area will offer a peaceful and reflective space for visitors.



The grotto area today.

### From Reception



Fernando : Our IT expert

The Centre Gift Shop at Baulkham Hills was established to assist Josephite ministries. The shop has done extremely well this year. As well as offering a variety of Mary MacKillop items, we have supported the work of the Sisters of St Joseph in Peru by selling items available through Ethica Accessories. The alpaca scarves and assorted handbags are particularly popular! We are also continuing to support the

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry by selling the ever popular silk scarves that are hand made by the women at Penrith. Our guests are pleasantly surprised by the variety of goods we have for sale and are pleased to be supporting such worthy causes.

Over the past 12 months we have upgraded and extended the Centre internet systems. This expansion means that wireless, as well

as cable computer connection, is now available throughout the entire Centre, in all conference rooms and bedrooms, for our day and overnight guests.

We have installed several new computer systems and a new telephone system over the past few months to provide an improved service to our guests. Further system enhancements are scheduled for 2009.

*Dianne*

## A Moving Population: Visitors to the Centre

We have come to the end of 2008 'an eventful and successful year'. We can say this as we have welcomed over *ten thousand* people through the Centre this calendar year.

The groups passing through the Centre had various requirements.

There were Day conferences, live-in guests, private retreat bookings and evening groups.

The Centre usage included the following:

*Religious Orders* – Chapters, Gatherings and Courses

*Ecumenical Groups* – Uniting Care Ageing, Wesley Mission and Meditation Groups

*Diocesan Groups* – Liturgy Groups, Priest's Retreats, Tribunals

*Schools & Colleges* – Retreat Days, Leadership Courses

*Adult Education Groups* – Catholic Education Offices of both Parramatta and Broken Bay.

*Parish Groups* – Pastoral Council training, Retreat Days

*Catholic & Community Health Groups* – Catholic Health Care, Centacare, Institute of Counselling

*Social Welfare Groups* – Hills Community Care

*Professional Groups* – Soroptimist International, Teacher Librarians, Sabbaticals & Retreats.

The journey continues into 2009. The aim is to develop the Centre to be viable, both

as a service to the people of God and as an appropriate stewardship of the goods of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph.



The Dining Area

## Our Hard working Staff



The total number of staff at St Joseph's is thirty including management. Most staff members are employed on a casual basis and are employed in administration, kitchen, dining, housekeeping and garden and maintenance.

The guests who visit the Centre always compliment the staff. The comments on the evaluation sheets, the thank you cards and the gifts they receive reflect the guest's gratitude for the service given.

Of the many comments made this one in particular appealed because it reflects the mission of the Centre:

"It's heart-warming to know that Mary MacKillop's dream is still alive and active in this wonderful place. Mary, I am sure would be proud of all the work that goes on here. Thank You."

(From Doreen Dague rsj )

The staff have worked extremely hard this year and especially during the second half of this year.

We do not have any bookings this year between Christmas and New Year so the staff will have a well-deserved break.

Christine

ST JOSEPH'S  
CONTINUES  
MARY MACKILLOP'S  
DREAM OF  
SERVICE  
AND EDUCATION

## What's in a Name?

St. Joseph's was originally the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Joseph, once known popularly as 'the brown Joeys'. To honour the history of the centre the rooms and outdoor areas have been given names recalling the aims, and the local and religious history associated with the site.

Mother Leonie Ryan, congregational leader for twelve years, was instrumental in the building of the new novi-

tiate in what was then a rural property. The novices shifted to Baulkham Hills from the Mother House at North Sydney. The Ryan wing recalls the part she played in establishing the new novitiate.

The Delaney Wing recalls the first Irish Mistress of Novices, Sister Francis Therese Delaney. The new conference room in that wing also received an Irish name;

*Aishling*—a word which means wisdom.

Other members of the Congregation associated with Mary MacKillop, as well as her family, were also celebrated in this way: her sister, Annie and brother Donald and her friends, Sisters Annette Henschke and Mechtilde Woods. Sister Campion Roche who worked for Mary's Beatification tirelessly is also remembered.



Entry to the Ryan



## A space for exploring life

### ST JOSEPH'S CENTRE FOR REFLECTIVE LIVING

Box 7386  
Baulkham Hills 2153  
New South Wales  
Australia

Phone: 61 02 9634 2317  
Fax: 61 02 9899 42 49  
E-mail:  
[reception@stjosephscentre.com.au](mailto:reception@stjosephscentre.com.au)

*St. Joseph's Centre is set in 18 hectares in the Hills District of north-western Sydney. The Centre has available 68 ensuited rooms for those groups requiring accommodation. As well there are numerous large conference rooms and technical facilities available for hire. Because of the size of the Centre it is possible to organize a large number of break-out rooms to facilitate discussion.*

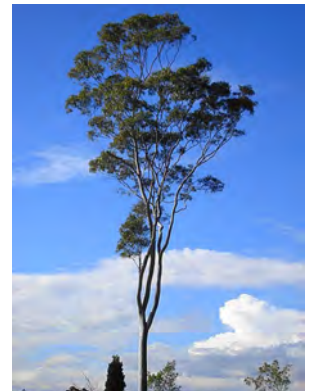
*The conference rooms are all well equipped for audio-visual use.*

*Other facilities available include an art space, a games room, swimming pool, a labyrinth and numerous quiet spaces suitable for reflection and meditation.*



**We're on the web:**

**[www.stjosephscentre.org.au](http://www.stjosephscentre.org.au)**



## Reflection: Becoming

Even after  
All this time  
The sun never says to the  
earth  
"You owe me."  
Look  
What happens  
With a love like that -  
It lights the whole  
World  
Meister Eckhart

"Let us create humanity in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves." (Gen 1:26)

Creation is not a completed act. It is a work in progress, a work in which humanity is gradually becoming what God intended it to be; the likeness of its Creator. That means the likeness of the Trinity—the 'us' who called humanity into being.

Each year the feast of Christmas in the person of the child Christ reminds us exactly what it means to be human—to be vulnerable and responsive to the creator, to rely on the other for all our needs.

This child Christ images for us a way of living that fulfils the divine creative impulse.

Richard Rohr understands that this fulfillment includes realizing our personal story interacts with the larger story of our society and culture. This in turn reflects the great archetypal patterns which are played and re-played in each life as the creation story unfolds.

Christmas beckons us to recognize that while we can never be God who is beyond our thought and so different from humanity to be incomprehensible the Trinitarian God offers us the human Christ as the One from whom we learn who we

are meant to be.

In the small human Christ we recognize our need to always be in relationship with ourselves, with our neighbour and with our God.

The Northern Christmas celebrations remind us Christ is gift to the dark but here in the south we are reminded that Christ is light and warmth and that this Christmas, as every Christmas, our Creator God calls us forth and blesses us in both light and dark.

Colleen

