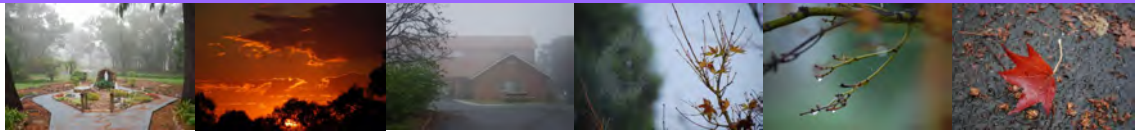


Stepping Stones



St Joseph's Centre for Reflective Living

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 3
WINTER
JULY 2009



Editorial

Annie Bond rsj

Sitting in my office that is warmed by the winter sun it seems somewhat incredible that it is July—we are half way through the year! While many of the trees on our property are standing dormant we are aware of the life that is being silently nurtured, as a result of the rains we have been receiving. This life will, in a few months bring a burst of colour to St Joseph's. As we await this burst of life in nature I am very aware of the ever growing life and energy that is a hallmark of St Joseph's.

Some of our visitors to date include Sr Anita from Western Australia who was celebrating her Platinum Jubilee of Religious Profession. Our Silver Jubilarians, Srs Jan, Kathryn and Margaret celebrated their Silver Jubilee amidst other Josephites, family and friends. Mass in the Chapel was followed by afternoon tea in our dining room.

With the completion of the much needed maintenance to the Chapel we were pleased to host an "Open House" event. This provided an opportunity for the Sisters to visit, have a guided tour of St Joseph's and to pray together in the Chapel.

On page three of this Newsletter you will find an article about the Art Exhibition that we hosted from 7th–22nd July.

A series of painting by Sr Pat Snudden rsj entitled *Imaging Blessed Mary MacKillop* formed the centre-piece of the exhibition. Pat organised the paintings under the four headings "Beginnings", "Suffering", "Transformation", "New Beginnings". After each painting had been given a title and a short reflection they were photographed and produced in a booklet that was for sale on the Opening Night of the Exhibition.

If possible we will host a cultural event each quarter. Hopefully the next event will be a performance by the Circular Keys Choir. We have also begun a conversation about the possibility of hosting an expose of East Timorese Culture. When dates and events have been organized these will be posted on our web site:

www.stjosephscentre.org.au

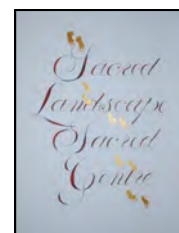
Next week we will have post-cards available for purchase. The current series is comprised of 36 cards depicting various aspects of St Joseph's.

From 10th–15th August St Joseph's will be the venue for the Societas Liturgica Congress. Societas Liturgica is an international, ecumenical liturgical body. This will be the first time the Congress has been held in the southern hemisphere. We are looking forward to welcoming the 195 people from all over the world who are currently enrolled as participants.

Inside this issue:

Food for the Spiritual Journey	2
Web Page Update	2
Circular Keys Choir	3
Sacred Landscape Sacred Centre	3
Centre Contact Details	4
Winter	4

Finally, I would like to thank those who have contributed to this edition of *Stepping Stones*—Mary Westbrook, Deborah Martin and Gillian Lee.



St. Joseph's Chapel Refurbishment



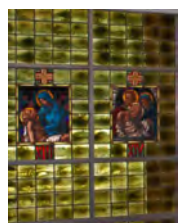
The sacred space of the Chapel is now refurbished. The dark water damaged wood paneling was replaced by a lighter acoustic wood panelling. This makes the area appear much larger.

Reverse cycle air-conditioning is now installed—a necessity in our

climate. New carpet has been laid and new lighting installed. As well as a hearing loop has been added.

The chapel is now also fully equipped with IT. This last installation enables the area to be used, when necessary, as a multipurpose centre which can comfortably accommodate up

to 200 people. The choir area is now a Blessed Sacrament Chapel providing a quiet, reflective space for meditation and prayer. This part of the Chapel is accessible 24 hours a day.



Food for the spiritual journey

Life circumstances can make it difficult to find spiritual nourishment in everyday living; perhaps the lack of time, or resources, or health, or location hinders your access to activities you desire such as a group with whom to pray or exchange ideas, retreats or pilgrimages. A recent US nationwide poll (by The Barna Group) found that 75% of respondents agreed with the statement, “God is motivating people to stay connected with Him, but in different ways and through different types of experiences than in the past”. This view was equally common among Catholics and Protestants.

As my preferred spiritual options decline, I have found that the internet can provide new forms of spiritual support. At a prayer level Sacred Space:

<http://sacredspace.ie/>, a site run by the Irish Jesuits, produces a daily sequence which includes a scriptural text and prayers and occupies about ten minutes. Around the world 640 people pray on Sacred Space each hour.

Web Page Update

Recently Annie, Heather and myself received training on how to update the website for St. Joseph’s at Baulkham Hills. We now have in-house skills to update the existing pages as well as create new pages. Our pages are now being regularly updated with happenings in and around St. Joseph’s at Baulkham Hills.

Upper Room Ministries in the USA has a daily devotional message which it emails to two and a half million people world-wide. This consists of a biblical text and a reader written meditation. You can sign up to receive these emails at:

www.upperroom.org/devotional/email/ .

My favourite site for spiritual riches is Spirituality and Practice at:

www.spiritualityandpractice.com/.

Here you can read reviews of recent spiritual books, films and DVDs and much more. The site provides a religious practice and a religious reading for the day. You can embark on (at a cost) e-retreats and e-courses which email you daily input from the retreat director and allow you to discuss issues with participants online. There is a regular free email newsletter which provides information about other spiritual resources. One I recently accessed was a television series, “Global Spirit” currently showing in North America. At the program website:

www.linktv.org/globalspirit/video you can watch many of the hour long episodes. The first is a conversation between Karen Armstrong, comparative religion scholar and author,

and Dr Robert Thurman, a professor of Buddhist Studies, about our desire to reach God or attain spiritual enlightenment. The program blurb says: “Drawing on personal experiences and the guests’ extensive knowledge of various religious traditions, this fascinating conversation illuminates the individual and universal dimensions of the Spiritual Quest. The episode asks questions that have intrigued humanity since the dawn of time such as: What is the meaning of life? What does it mean to take a spiritual journey, what would that journey look and feel like and what is the role of a teacher?” I have watched this discussion several times as it provides so much to think about. Other programs in the series include, “In search of ecstasy”, “Forgiveness and healing”. “Earth wisdom for a world in crisis”, “Music, sound and the sacred” and “Art and the creative spirit”.

Mary Westbrook, a visitor to St Joseph’s



Some changes already made include: adding the Daily Thoughts from the writings of Blessed Mary MacKillop to our ‘Home’ page, uploading *Stepping Stones* to the ‘Newsletters’ page, details and photos of our recent Sacred Landscape Sacred Centre Art Exhibition in our ‘What’s New’ page, and details of the Retreats and Sabbaticals, including links to brochures and booking forms, in our ‘Our Services’ page.

In the coming months we would like to review the overall website and perhaps give it a ‘face-lift’.

We also plan to continue updating the existing information and to include features and articles relevant to the centre. Please keep an eye out for changes, and if you have any ideas or suggestions please send them through.

The website can be found at:

<http://www.stjosephscentre.org.au/>

Gillian Lee—Staff Member



Circular Keys Chorus

If you are anywhere near the Pacifica Room of St Joseph’s Baulkham Hills on a Wednesday night, you will hear women’s voices singing in exquisite harmony, punctuated with a lot of laughter. If you walk past (and you’re always welcome to stay and listen) you’ll see more than seventy women of all ages and backgrounds working to perfect the art of singing ‘barbershop’.

This is Circular Keys Chorus in rehearsal. They belong to an organisation called Sweet Adelines International, whose motto is “Real Women, Real Harmony, Real Fun”. In six months’ time most of the chorus will be travelling to the United States to represent Australia at an international barbershop convention, which this year is being held in Nashville, Tennessee. In front of an audience of about 10,000 people Circular Keys Chorus will sing two songs (for just six minutes on stage), and their performance will be evaluated

against strict criteria by a panel of eight judges.

What is it about this art form that inspires such passion and commitment? There’s the joy of singing in harmony and reaching our audience’s hearts. There’s the endless opportunity to learn and to develop our talents – not just in singing and performing, but in leadership and administration. And then there’s the friendship and support of women whose lives, no matter how different, share common experiences of love and grief, achievement and loss – and laughter.

We know that in Nashville we will be competing against the best barbershop choruses in the world. We don’t expect to win, but we hope that we can make it our best performance ever, and one to be proud of. We know that, whatever happens in that six minutes on stage, we will learn enormously from the experience and make new friends (and have a lot of fun) on the journey.

Deborah Martin
For Circular Keys Chorus



Sacred Landscape—Sacred Centre

C. O’Sullivan rsj

The journey we call life can have its simple moments but it is often mysterious and complex. There are, however people who invite us into their own journey and help us to understand our own lives a little better. Artists observe their world, reflect on it and find some way of interpreting their experience for others.

St. Joseph’s Centre for Reflective Living at Baulkham Hills was privileged to host an exhibition of the work of four such artists recently. The Exhibition which opened on June 7th was entitled *Sacred Landscape: Sacred Centre* and celebrated the ways each of the individual artists and artistic groups captured their very different life experience. The ‘sacred’ was very much in evidence in the works displayed.



The four artists were Steve Bailey, Patricia Snudden, Elaine Walker and The Sisters of the Dreaming.

Steve Bailey is a psychotherapist who has had a longtime interest in photography and in particular photographing the beauty of the wilderness areas in both Australia and New Zealand. His photography of Australia and New Zealand enhances the landscape enabling the viewer to be in that environment for a frozen moment in time.

Patricia Snudden is a Josephite Sister who has had a longtime interest in Mandalas. These are drawings contained in a circle and brought to the notice of Western Culture by C. G Jung. Pat’s works include a series of mandala drawings she has completed over the last two years as well as a series of paintings celebrating the life of Mary MacKillop, Australia’s first saint.

Elaine Walker is also a Josephite sister. Her beautiful calligraphy recalls another age when Medieval monks worked in a scriptorium and by so doing preserved much of their spiritual and social heritage.

The group of artists, *The Sisters of the Dreaming*, presented a variety of works from painting to sculpture to silk screen works. The group consists of a number of talented Aboriginal women from the Aboriginal Catholic Mission centred in Penrith. These women celebrate their culture and spirituality in their art. Their works have a vibrancy about them and show the delight the artists have in playing with colour and design.



The exhibition which led us into an appreciation of what it means to touch on our own sacred landscape—sacred centre was launched by Uncle Wes who performed a smoking ceremony and welcome to country.

**ST JOSEPH'S CENTRE
FOR REFLECTIVE
LIVING**

Centre for Reflective Living

Box 7386
Baulkham Hills 2153

Phone: 61 02 9634 2317

Fax: 61 02 9899 4249

Email:

reception@stjosephscentre.org.au

St. Joseph's Centre is set in 18 hectares in the Hills District of north-western Sydney. The Centre has available 68 rooms with ensuites 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.

Our newly refurbished Chapel also provides an additional area available for use as a multi-functional space.

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



Our web page: www.stjosephscentre.org.au

A Changing World

As winter begins here in Australia changes can be felt in our bones whether we are young, or in the middle or senior way of life. Our years ring with physical, emotional, intellectual changes some positive some not so to put it mildly! We grow, regress, grow again, resist growth, gain new insights into the possibilities of wholistic growth, we find God, we allow God to find us. Winter trees image for us the transience of life. Winter gets down to the bare bones. The trees experience their basic needs and respond in truth to their environment, to their tree-culture.

In the fragmented and violent world we inhabit so much is stripped away that the image can seem to be all there is; the winter world draws itself in black and white. 'Thou shalt not' can become the dominant voice muting other voices promising life will return. Laws and regulations seem to provide a solution to every problem. It is true that the great laws must be obeyed. The trees must rest, recuperate in order to blossom. Animals must hibernate, the world must keep turning to hold its place in the universe; the universe must keep expanding until it comes to the point of inertia.

By obeying these laws the world maintains its ability to exist, to change, to modify itself as needed. But the little laws which proliferate and have no purpose except to maintain control of the other can serve no useful purpose. Such laws Make the world seem safe but are the stuff of the winter of our discontent.

Winter challenges us to tear away our illusions about safety and security. To shut down our demands on each other and on the earth. It challenges us to hear the voice of difference and to be present to it. To see the world as it really is – in constant flux and change. The poet, Gerald Manley Hopkins wrote of such a world: *Glory be to God for dappled things, for skies as couple-coloured as a brindled cow, for rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim* – for all things couple-coloured we give thanks.

Such a world reflects in all its changes the infinite mystery of God whose greatest mystery is that in Christ God reduced Godself to our size so that we might glimpse even in our winter – the greatness of a compassionate God who walks with us in our fragmentation. This is a God who is so different to us that without Christ we would have no idea of what the Godhead could be or of God's infinite difference to us. This is the God of the great laws which paradoxically give freedom to the multiverse.

This is also the God who at whatever age winter is speaking to us can see our potential and recognise our variety and beauty. This God knows all our seasons and invites us to them as well.

C. O'Sullivan rsj

