



# Encounters



Sisters of Charity of Australia

EASTER 2023

*We Sisters of Charity, seeking God in all things, commit to a culture of encounter and collaboration.*  
28<sup>th</sup> General Chapter Direction Statement, 2021

## *Welcome!*

The following short sentence is attributed to St Francis of Assisi:

“The journey is essential to the dream”.

As Christians a couple of weeks ago, we began again the journey of Lent. A time of reflection, consideration and a commitment to being called and entering more deeply into the dream – God’s dream!

And what a dream that is, to share in the abundance of life in Christ. As well as the experience of anticipation, I think I am being called this Lent to appreciate more deeply the journey and all whom I encounter on this journey.

I am conscious of our Chapter Direction Statement: *to commit to a culture of encounter...*

I am surrounded by elements of the dream of God, in people, the universe, the challenges of our broken world, the barrages of technology and the whispers of nature and the beauty of sunrise each day!

If I accept these aspects of the dream then the journey to Easter will be overflowing with mystery and grace.

Each of you is part of the journey and the dream for me and I give thanks for these gifts! Lenten blessings and Easter joy to each of you.

*Laureen*

*We have every reason  
to be thankful to*

*Almighty Providence,*

*Mary Aikenhead 13<sup>th</sup> March 1835*



*Easter dawns ...  
we greet God’s holy  
season, seeking, sensing  
resurrection’s rays.  
They will fill our bones,  
our hearts, our spirits,  
and spur us forward to  
newer days.*

*May the life, love and joy of  
Easter be with you  
today and all days.*

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## *The Ministry of Hospitality...*



*Contribute to the needs  
of God's people,  
pursue the practice of  
hospitality...*

*Romans 12:13*

### *Woodend, Vic.*

Over generations Sisters of Charity have come to be recognised as women who visit, especially in homes.

The gift of hospitality comes alive for the giver and the receiver through generosity of heart: an acceptance of one another. And it is not always easy to offer or to accept this gift.

Currently my life is one big kaleidoscope as I share peoples' lives in their homes.

Visiting is forever challenging: a riding of the highs and lows of life. So when I walk up to a door I always ask Mary Aikenhead to help me "not put my foot in it" during the visit!

Covid put up visiting barriers, so I rang 10 or more people each day to keep connected.

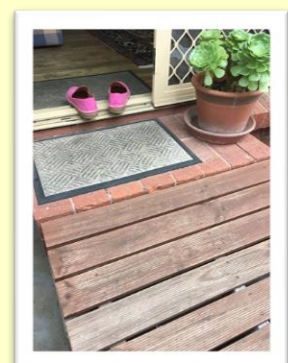
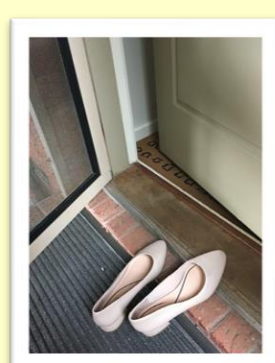
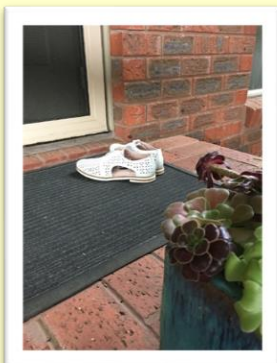
Even the most introverted person wants connection to others.

Pope Francis has written of the longing, the need for a culture of encounter.

Whether we write, phone, drop in, plan a visit or get together or event; each encounter is gospel.

*"I was a stranger and you invited me in..."* Matt 25:32 Whose life will you share today?

*My shoes... symbolising me approaching doorways/ homes... privacy prohibits me providing photos of people. So, here's my creative way round the dilemma! Virginia Mahony rsc*



## *Mononia Community, Fitzroy, Vic.*

Towards the end of 2022 Mononia hosted an RSC Advent prayer and luncheon. prepared by Kate and Judi.

As our guests left and we were clearing away, the doorbell rang and standing there was the blood sister of another RSC.

Our unexpected visitor had taken a bad stumble and tumble and had asked a passer-by to help her get to Mononia.

She was in shock and needed some instant care, both physically and emotionally

Two of our community, both former nurses immediately came to her aid, settling her and attending to her aches and pains.

She was later able to join us for dinner and then return home.

A gracious thank you card arrived from her soon after.

So that day our Community received invited guests and one unexpected guest.

Please God both experienced hospitality and care and witnessed an aspect of our Charism alive and well at Mononia.

*Our front door.*



Patricia Walker

## *Ashfield, NSW.*

Living at Ashfield has allowed us to offer hospitality to a number of people. Some instances over the last five years have been faith sharing and reflection evenings with our sisters and others; retreat days for groups such as the Edmund Rice Justice Centre; Grief Care staff and parish groups and we enjoyed hosting, during Covid-19, the luncheon following the Final Profession of Sister Amanda (with reduced numbers, of course!)

We also take opportunities to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions for members of our community. At various times we have been able to offer short-term accommodation for sisters and colleagues visiting Sydney

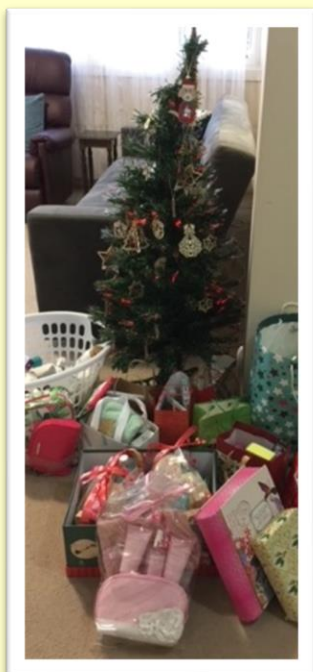
One of the highlights of our year is our annual Christmas celebration when the sisters bring along gifts for Tierney House. This year an invitation was extended to the sisters to join us on Shrove Tuesday for pancakes.

Hospitality is part of our Charism- offering care and comfort to all, especially those in need. As a community we try to put this into action. There are many ways to be hospitable. I see it as a mutual grace- filled opportunity.

Helen Clarke rsc



*Top: Retreat group*



*Bottom: Gifts for Tierney House.*



*Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!*

*Celebrate glad jubilee!*

*Sr Catherine (Cate) O'Brien, 50 years, 2022*

I celebrated my Golden Jubilee on Saturday 25th June, in Corpus Christi Church, Nundah. This was my parish where I attended primary school and made my final vows in 1977. Fr Wrex Woolnough was the main celebrant, a long-time friend since Prep.

Sisters from south and north, along with family and friends joined in celebrating my 50 years as a Sister of Charity. Sadly, my eldest brother passed away suddenly a few days prior to the day.

2022 marks the 90th anniversary of Profession of my Aunty Molly (Sr Fabre) and my sister, Margaret's (also Sr Fabre) 70th year of profession. Family representatives from 4 generations were involved in the liturgy. After the renewal of vows Wrex invited all the sisters to join me on the sanctuary for a special blessing.

Karan, Dorothy, and Loretta who, because of Covid, were not able to celebrate their Jubilees, joined me in receiving an Apostolic blessing from Pope Francis. Following the mass, we continued the celebrations in the parish hall. Sr Clare Nolan kindly said a few words and led us in the toast.

Thank you for your prayers, support, and presence on the occasion of my jubilee and for the many messages of sympathy on the death of my eldest brother Des. We had two wonderful celebrations in a week!



*Above: Cate's delicious cake.*

*Below: Fr Wrex, Cate and young relatives.*



*Sr Leone Wittmack 50 years 2023*

Leone has been ministering in Darwin within Catholic Care for the last 8 years and she chose to celebrate her Golden Jubilee with family, Sisters, and friends in Brisbane.

The Sisters of Charity have a long history with St Finbarr's Parish and School, Ashgrove, and it is very fitting to return the roots of the Congregation in Brisbane to celebrate 50 years of Leone's Religious Profession.

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January, in St Finbarr's Church, Fr Gerry Kalinowski PP, celebrated the Liturgy, which was thoughtfully prepared by Leone, recalling many aspects of her various ministries over the years.

The celebration continued over lunch in the School Hall with a wonderful opportunity for catching up with each other. Sr Annette Cunliffe led the Toast to Leone and speeches followed.

We thank God for Blessings bestowed on Leone and look to the future where Leone can continue living out her Motto: *With you, my God, I am and I can.*



*Leone cutting her jubilee cake and receiving her Papal Blessing from Laureen*

*Sr Judith Peart ... 70 years.*

*5<sup>th</sup> January 2023.*

**“One is my master, Christ”**

“Judith’s celebration was a lovely afternoon in the function room at her home at St Catherine’s Balwyn. Judith and her All Saints Community were joined by Denise Hannebery rsc and some of Judith’s family. We enjoyed a cuppa, cake, and reminiscing, as we acknowledged Judith’s long life of dedication as a Sister of Charity, congratulating her on behalf of the generations of children, parishioners and others who remember her ministry. It was a joyous day for us all, especially Judith, who delighted in the occasion and the company.”

*Top: Judith with family members, sisters, and friends at her home. Below: Judith and community members and Denise.*



*Sr Pauline Nicholson... 60 years.*

*15<sup>th</sup> January 2023.*

**“I surrender”**

Pauline celebrated with family and sisters during the day at her home in St Vincent’s Care, Bronte. Pauline’s customary gracious welcome was evident as she greeted her visitors on the day. The celebration gave others the chance to reciprocate Pauline’s many acts of kindness to others.

*Pauline is pictured with Srs Anne Taylor (community member) and Amanda Nguyen (companion).*

*Below are some of the many cards from sisters and Pauline’s friend and colleagues from her variety of ministries over her 60 years.*





*Work together for our marginalised earth...*

*Speak out and act, where injustice hurts the marginalised, people in our Church, and each other.*

*Be inclusive, boundary breakers for mission.*

“Our Evolving Future”,  
Chapter Direction Statement 2021

*Sisters Colleen Jackson and Anne Mayberry report on recent events in their ministries...*

## *Talitha Kum International*

### *“Making the Invisible Visible”*

Magic? Not really. On February 8 Pope Francis called on the young people of the world (that’s all of us, right?) to walk together “hand in hand”, “to build a culture of encounter that leads to the conversion of hearts and inclusive societies, capable of unmasking stereotypes and protecting the rights of every person.” He called on us to end the indignity and injustice of human trafficking. Last year, 50 million people worldwide were enslaved. More than ever in history, including right here in Australia! Human trafficking and slavery are consumer-driven – all of us contribute to the demand for ever-cheaper goods and services.

Talitha Kum is an international “network of networks” united in the fight against human trafficking and the support and healing of survivors. ACRATH ( *Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans*) is Australia’s arm of that network. Please join us – learn more (You’ll be shocked), and choose to change your consumer habits. For example, try to be a “good egg” this Easter (choose to gift slavery-free chocolate). And check out [www.acrath.org.au](http://www.acrath.org.au), [www.talithakum.info](http://www.talithakum.info), or [www.prayagainsttrafficking.net](http://www.prayagainsttrafficking.net). And be inspired by our young people <https://vimeo.com/796886412>

Colleen Jackson rsc, Talitha Kum International Coordination Committee (Oceania).



*Photo: TKICC team with members of the Talitha Kum International Office in Rome and continental representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Latin America with Colleen (back, right).*

## *Sisters of Charity Remote and Rural Ministry*

Sr Anne Mayberry writes: A “two- metre high” wall of water inundated St Joseph’s Primary School at Eugowra in November 2022, trashing everything in its wake.

The entire contents of classrooms were lost--teaching resources, children’s work, pencils, backpacks, furniture and much more.

80% of the town’s children also experienced damage to their homes, leaving many of them traumatised.

There are 30 children in the school.

The local state school accommodated St Joseph’s children by giving them a classroom in which to gather.

Come 2023, they are now using demountable classrooms and along with many organisations, Sisters of Charity Remote and Rural, have been busy collecting resources to help the staff and children in the months ahead. Prior to Christmas we sent a parcel of gift vouchers, courtesy of Holy Spirit school staff at Carnes Hill.

Mrs Elsa Skinner and friends, once again, gave generously buying toys, books and craft kits, pre-Christmas, to be delivered to the school. These were being individually packed for each child with the help of a couple of teachers from All Saints College, Liverpool.

We will maintain contact with the principal and staff of St Joseph’s to support and assist in whatever way we can.

Anne Mayberry rsc



*A detail from the banner of Remote and Rural Ministries*



*St Joseph’s Primary School Eugowra after the flood.*

*Dear Sr Laureen and the RSC community, . . .*

*Excerpts from a letter sent by Dr Lauren Sanders,  
Head of the Stroke Unit, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne  
to Sr Laureen Dixon, Congregational Leader, Sisters of Charity of Australia*



Many of you will know me as an RSC Companion from Melbourne. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 I was officially appointed as the Head of the Stroke Unit of St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne.

On my first day at SVHM as a registrar in 2014, Lisa McDonald, then Director of Mission at SVHM, told us "Don't be afraid to be kind to patients" .... I felt like I'd come home to a place where values were lived, not just words on letterhead.... (Here) was the freedom to be a healthcare worker with permission to care about something more than service provision.

I was reminded of this whilst preparing for my leadership interview with one of my colleagues...where he was told not to use the word "love, but rather "care about" .... This didn't work for us. *Love was in our very mission statement.* Our patients leave our care feeling loved. We strive *for the poor to have for love what the rich can have for money.* (Mary Aikenhead). We both *love* the teams we work with. We know the care and kindness and compassion are all kinds of love, but there is something powerful about calling it what it is. On the way to my interview, I popped into our chapel (and) prayed for the strength and compassion in leadership that (Mary Aikenhead) possessed and for my decisions to be grounded in both wisdom and, dare I say, love.

I wanted to write to you..., to express my commitment to continuing the mission of bringing God's love to those in need through the healing ministry of Jesus. I am so looking forward to the opportunity to serve the St Vincent's community, staff, patients, and families, in this leadership capacity.

*(Associate Professor Lauren Sanders (MBBS Grad Dip Int Health, PhD FRACP G Dip Clin Edu)  
Head, Stroke Unit, Department Neurosciences, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne*

*From our Constitutions . . .*

*Partnership with others in ministry is a valued part of our heritage. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our collaborative ministry results in vigorous and extensively useful action. We become signs of God's loving kindness at work in the world as we join together to serve the Church and each other. # 28*

***Sisters of Charity Companions***

*meet in both Melbourne and Sydney several times per year*

*For further information in these states*

*please contact our Congregational Office*

[admin@rscoffice.com](mailto:admin@rscoffice.com) or 02 9367 1222





## *An Easter Reflection*

*Sr Anne Turner reflects...*

The Risen Christ is Hope for all who suffer because of war, natural disasters, loss of loved ones, imprisonment, famine, poverty, or homelessness. Pope Francis prayed that the Risen Lord may be “a source of rebirth” for them and for all of us.

Hope lies at the centre of every human life. Perhaps the saddest people we will ever meet as we journey through life are those who have hoped countless times and have always been disappointed. Many of these people have given up, hope has died, life seems pointless, and they feel unlovable and useless. Right throughout the New Testament we see Jesus helping people such as these, listening to them and accepting them in a gentle, healing way, which restores their hope and gives them courage to trust again. He does not condemn, he loves. We can think of countless examples of his unconditional love: the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Peter, Mary Magdalene, and the woman at the well, to name a few.

We may not be able to prevent wars or global disasters yet, but as Easter people, called to live by, and be bearers of, hope to those we meet, perhaps we can try to respond to the needs we come across each day with greater empathy, respect, and practical help where possible.

As chosen followers of our Risen Lord, let us continue to live in the spirit of our Direction Statement:

***We hear the call for us to be an inclusive community of presence for each other, our church, and our world.***

***We commit to deep listening and open-hearted, respectful encounters.***

***We will be ‘more’ for the greater glory of God.***



***“The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the source of hope for humankind.***

***The Easter message does not offer us a mirage or reveal a magic formula. It does not point to an escape from the difficult situations that we are experiencing...***

***“The Easter message speaks concisely of the event that gives us the hope that does not disappoint: ‘Jesus who was crucified has risen.’”***

Pope Francis, Easter Mass,  
2021,



# An Easter Prayer



## Our Call to Mission

The daily living out of our religious profession is an invitation to enter into the paschal mystery of Jesus. His mission, to bring the good news of God's love to all, culminated in his self-emptying in death and his resurrection. We seek to understand ever more fully his teaching that, in losing our life for his sake we find it, that there is a foolishness that makes us wise, that when we are weak we are strong, that in death there is life. In sacrificial love there is a mysterious relationship between renunciation and joy, and this joy should be especially evident in us who are consecrated to the Lord. The cross is for us, as it was for him, proof of the greatest love.

Constitutions, #8

## Our Call to Reflection

### Suggested Song: Come to the Feast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etWUILcMcT8>

The Gospel stories of Easter are more than stories of celebration. They evoke in various ways the disciples' transition from despair at the death of their friend and loss of their own hope, to joy and the understanding that God has freed them through his death. Disciples cowering behind locked doors... disciples leaving Jerusalem in grief... Mary Magdalen... as she goes to the tomb. These stories all point to the mystery of God's presence and victory in what seemed to be a crushing defeat. In a stirring passage, St Paul begins with the words *Nothing can separate us from the love of God.* (and) lists the human catastrophes that might be expected to do so. He was confident because he believed so strongly that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

Andrew Hamilton SJ, *Eureka Street.*

*The good news? He is not here!  
Christ is everywhere and Love will make us whole.*

Ilia Delio OSF, 2020



*Resurrections happen when we least expect them-  
slow emergence of the dawn after a night of darkness,  
imperceptible sound of birdsong swelling to the liquid notes  
of the magpie greeting the rising sun,  
the small shiftings of a heart heavy with grief,  
a growing sense of infinite love within the emptiness of loss.*

*Morning light comes with assurance of the sun's warming rays,  
thawing the frozen landscape of the soul,  
opening body, mind and spirit to the gift of new possibility,  
absorbing us in the Mystery that is oneness of Being.*

EMB

## **Our Call to Respond**

Risen Christ... we sing to you with joy... Alleluia!

Risen Christ ... we rejoice in your resurrection... Alleluia!

Risen Christ ... we proclaim your glory... Alleluia!

Risen Christ ... we open our hearts to your new life... Alleluia!

Risen Christ ... all creation rejoices in your presence... Alleluia!

Resurrection happens whenever love transforms life when someone offers forgiveness despite a burning desire for vengeance, when a nation begins to value and protect the rights of all, not just a few. Poor, hungry, homeless and disenfranchised as brothers and sisters, when immigrants and refugees are not left to drown or incarcerated but are welcomed as the children of God. Resurrection happens when enemies sit down together to talk instead of planning one another's demise. Resurrection is happening all around us; let us venture out of our locked doors and celebrate. Jesus, our Lord and our God lives!

Patricia Sanchez,  
quoting Ralph Kuehner and Joseph Juknialis,  
(Living the Word, Paluch, 2005)





**We pray:**

Be with us Risen One,  
as we continue our pilgrim journey as an Easter people.  
Guide our footsteps with the light of Easter faith,  
that we may walk in your ways... Amen.

**We go out:**

Let us venture out of our locked doors and celebrate.  
Jesus, our Lord and our God lives! Thanks be to God!

*Alleluia!*



*We pay our respect to the traditional custodians of all the lands upon which we live and work, Gadigal People of the Eora nation, Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung People, part of the Kulin nations, Larrakia People of the Larrakia region, Turrbal and Jagera People of Meanjin nation, Palawa People of Nipuluna nation, Wadawarrung and Dja Dja Wurrung people. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging. We commit to walking and learning together.*

**Sisters of Charity of Australia**

