



UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH - HOLY SPIRIT PROVINCE IN AUSTRALIA, (No17/ December 2014)

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

WHEN I was little, one of the most fun times I experienced was to visit my Aunty Wanda. It was an opportunity to gather together with the members of the extended family across few generations. With my cousins we would go to the back room of the house and while sitting on sofas or even under the table, in the dim light, we will listen to the stories told us by some family members or simply we would make up our own stories. I cherish the memories of those moments until today.

Living in Australia gives us a unique opportunity to learn about the Dreamtime Stories. The Stories of the Dreaming are more than myths, legends, fables, parables or quaint tales. They are definitely not fairytales for amusement of children. Down through generations, the Aboriginal people's stories, were told orally, but were never written down. They were the oral textbooks, of their accumulated knowledge, spirituality, and wisdom, from when time began.

A very important part of our life is to share the stories. We tell our stories for ourselves and as a gift to future generations. It is because of the stories told us by others, that we can appreciate the gifts of today and see things which we might not see ourselves. The same reality could create the different perception and create the different stories. Stories connect the past and present to the future.

This issue of our Province Newsletter from Australia is full of stories. Some stories are told by the sisters and describe most recent events of our prayer and ministry life: from the latest educational achievements, new ministry experiences to the joy of welcoming the new affiliate.

Other stories are told by the people with whom we work in many places. You could read the homily of the Emeritus bishop of Parramatta proclaimed to us on the Feast of Mother Foundress; hear the kind words of appreciation of the Principal of Our Lady of Grace School in Perth and listen to the voices of the Associates of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

There are quite a few stories describing memories of people who were with us for the past 50 to 60 years. Some stories are told with words, others are expressed by photos.

When I read the stories from this issue I felt like being on the journey. The stories made me very grateful to God for the past, present and the future. They gave me new hope and reassurance of His loving presence. I was in awe of the mysterious ways of God engages us in His mission.

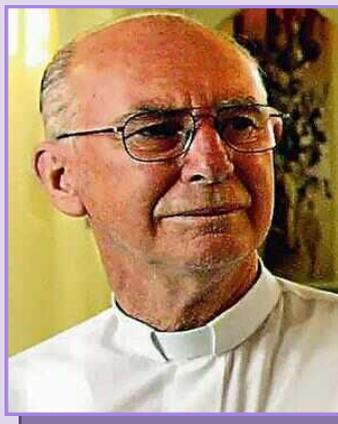
I invite you to have a similar experience. Maybe you could make yourself a cuppa; put on the soothing music and sit comfortably on the armchair while being taken on a journey. I wonder where would it take you and what stories would it awake in your hearts...

Enjoy the reading! ■



SR GRACE (GRAŻYNA
ROČŁAWSKA)
PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

MOTHER FOUNDRESS INSPIRATION TO US ALL



THANK you for the invitation to celebrate the Mass to commemorate the Feast of your Foundress, Blessed Mary of Jesus the good Shepherd.

I note that it was just on ten years ago that I celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the coming of the sisters to Marayong with

their motto “Your will be done”

We have good reason today to give thanks to God or the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Vatican II affirmed that the grace given to the founder of a Congregation extends to the entire membership of the Institute.

Paul VI stressed this “ Religious Congregations live and thrive only as long as the Spirit of the Founder is left alive in their works and their religious observance “.

St. Pope John Paul II repeated this in one of his talks: “Each Congregation is called to a constant conversion of heart within the ramifications of its proper structure. This conversion of heart needs to be directed to the growth of the Institute” specific nature as defined by the chrism of the founder”.

And this is where the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family has been massively blest.

From an early age Blessed Mary led a deeply spiritual life which can be summarised:

And indomitable faith, boundless love, total giving of herself to God’s Will, complete entrustment to Mary, service the Church, heroic love of God and neighbour, and a special desire to help families. All of this joined to an overwhelming kindness. So you have someone to imitate!

The outstanding feature of her life was that she didn’t ask anyone to do anything that she hadn’t practiced herself. She spread God’s love by first imitating and living the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and so asked her Sisters through, prayer, community and ministry to witness to a family spirit among themselves, and to be dedicated to the moral and religious renewal of family life and

inspire Catholic families to imitate the Holy Family of Nazareth.

She was totally given to imitating Jesus: the truth He spoke, the actions He undertook, not seeking anything for Himself but desiring to share his treasure with everyone.

And she asks her Sister to live His love, spirit of self-sacrifice, self-denial and total surrender to God’s Will. To be patient in love and mercy towards others so that their unworthiness does not keep them from Him.

Blessed Mary insisted on her Sisters striving for love and unity among themselves “Let there be no bitterness, accusations, jealousy or aversion among you” she said “but act only in mutual love and unity”.

To summarise: The chief purpose of the Congregation in the words of the foundress is that the Sisters offer their prayer, works and entire lives for the Church and the Holy Father, and imitate the hidden life and virtues of the Holy Family.

And so the charity, delicacy of feelings among yourselves, eagerness to serve one another, love for religious life, the rule of silence, faithfulness to prayers, dedication to your work, your spirit of mortifications a result, build on the example of your Foundress.

It is clear that the basic postulate of the religious life is the fullness of love, attained by holiness of life, union with Jesus and conversion of heart.

And so your Foundress’ legacy as practised by herself is that you extend to yourselves, to other, the Kingdom of God’s love as blossomed in the Holy Family and which attracts others through simplicity and charity.

Is there need to say more?

She was a true Mother and may each of you be the same. ...■

BY BP KEVIN MANNING,
Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Parramatta

*Homily proclaimed on 24 November 2014
celebrating the Feast of our Mother Foundress
at St Joseph’s Convent, Quakers Hill*

60 YEARS OF MARAYONG

THE organization and planning of this day took quite a long time. But finally it was time to put the plan into action. Sister Grażyna Rocławska, Provincial Superior of Holy Spirit Province, welcomed the congregated guests. Fifteen minutes before the Mass, a video entitled “Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth 60 Years of Service 1954-2014” was shown.

The celebration of the Eucharist began at 11:00 am in Our Lady of Częstochowa Polish War Memorial Chapel. The main celebrant, Bishop Anthony Fisher OP Bishop of Parramatta was joined by Fr Wieslaw Slowik SJ (Polish Council), Father Henryk Zasiura SChr, Father Kazimierz Bojda SChr, Fr Jozef Kołodziej SChr, Father Shane Reade SDB, Fr Ron Mc Farlane (St Andrews Parish Priest, Marayong), the Vicar Generals of the Parramatta Diocese, Fr Chris De Souza and Rev Peter Williams, and Deacon Joseph Ledang, who assisted the Bishop and read the Gospel in English. The readings of the scriptures for the day were proclaimed in Polish and English. However, the prayers of the Faithful truly represented the different languages and cultures that are currently in the Marayong area, as well as, in our community. Prayers were said in English, Polish, Maltese, Belorussian and Tagalog. The congregation was totally surprised that Bishop Fisher pronounced the final blessing in Polish.

The dignitaries on the right side were: Sister Helen Tereba, General Assistant of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth; Ms Dorota Preda, Vice-Consul, representing Ms Regina Jurkowska Polish Consul; Ms C Donaldson Delegate of the Honourable Len Robinson, Mayor of Blacktown; Mr John Farrugia, Head of Property and Facilities at Catholic Education Office Parramatta; Mr Kevin Rocks CEO of Holy Family Services and Mr Andre Heyko-Porebski, Chairman of the HFS Board; Dr John De Courcy, Consultant Emeritus of the CEO of Parramatta and his wife; Mr Nick Vidot, Principal of St Andrews College; Mr Richard Mc Guinness, former Principal of St Andrew’s Primary School. They were joined by Sister Ailsa MacKinnon RSM, Vicar for Religious and Sister Joanna Zarzyczna, Assistant Provincial of Holy Spirit Province. Sisters from interstate and surrounding convents as well as other lay people filled the next few pews.

On the left hand side the dance troupe Lajkonik,

scouts and scout leaders, and children from Polish Saturday School. The Associates of the Holy Family from Sydney and Canberra were also present.

It was surprising that representatives of many religious congregations of brothers and sisters came from the Blacktown area to celebrate with us. Sister Grażyna Rocławska concluded the proceedings by inviting the guests to the John Paul II Hall.

After this announcement, the guests proceeded to the John Paul II Hall for a brief programme and refreshments. The hall was “packed” with guests. So much so that table seating was totally used, and the overflow of guests either sat or stood against the perimeter of the hall. The special guests, of course, sat at their own table in front of their name cards that marked their seat.

After the guests were mostly seated, Mr Leszek Mądry, the Master of Ceremonies introduced himself and the first speaker, Sister Helen Tereba, representative of Mother General, Mother Jana Zawieja. Sister Helen Tereba delivered her speech in English in segments, and these were promptly translated by Sister Grażyna Rocławska. After her presentation, Sister Helen Tereba requested that Sister Joanna Zarzyczna come to the stage to receive a Papal Blessing from Pope Francis that was arranged as a gift for the occasion. Then she presented a certificate of Appreciation to Holy Family Services and the Board for their generous donation to the school in Ghana. Mr Kevin Rocks CEO of Holy Family Services and Mr Andre Heyko-Porebski, Chairman of the HFS Board, jointly received this certificate of appreciation. Next, Ms Dorota Preda, Polish Vice-Consul, and Father Wieslaw Slowik SJ, Polish Council, delivered short speeches of congratulations. Lunch was served by the sisters, associates, scouts leaders and the catering team. During the food service, the children of Holy Family Services Long Day Care with their caregivers performed two short dances. Lajkonik juniors sang three songs in Polish and did a dance. This was followed by the Lajkonik seniors who did a lovely folk dance as well. Coffee, tea and cold drinks were self-served. The visitors could entertain their children with the Jumping Castle and by visiting the Long Day Care. The party ended around three o’clock. A brief clean-up occurred and the hall was emptied. ■

BY SR JEAN WOJCIK

See pages 10 –11 for photos from the event.

50 YEARS OF MEMORIES



MY association with Marayong began over 50 years ago. I have vivid memories as a young child, of sitting in the upstairs dormitory of the orphanage, my mother sewing clothes for the boarders while my father was working

somewhere in the grounds of Marayong.

With the establishment of a Polish Saturday School at Marayong in the 1960s, I met Sister Celina Jablonska, who played a very important part in my life. Although I had already been immersed in all things Polish - language, traditions and culture by my parents and grandparents, Sister Celina taught me a love of the Polish language. Over the years, she became a very close family friend to the extent that my sons called her *Ciocia Siostra* (Auntie Sister).

In 1973, while studying for my Higher School Certificate, I received a phone call from Sr. Efigenia who was the organist at Marayong. As she was returning to the United States, she asked me to be her successor. A great honour! It was a very daunting prospect, including the fact that I was a pianist, and not an organist. After a few lessons from Sr. Efigenia, it was time to go solo. My first major liturgical celebration at Marayong as organist was a concelebrated mass by the Archbishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II). After Mass, I had the pleasure of having a conversation with His Eminence: a private audience with the (future) Pope.

As church organist at Marayong, I worked very closely with the clergy, in particular Ks Andrzej Duczowski, who became my mentor and close personal and family friend until his death in 2014. He had a passion and vast knowledge of music particularly contemporary Polish Composers- introducing me to the music of Penderecki, Lutoslawski and Gorecki. As an undergraduate student at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, I would attend concerts, listen to and discuss music with Ks Andrzej.

In December 1980, I married my wife Teresa in Our Lady of Czestochowa Church and our sons Szymon and Andrej were both baptised in the church at Marayong, the centrepiece, Jewel in the

Crown, the essence of what is Marayong. Furthermore, my mother currently resides in one of the villas at Marayong.

When invited by Sr Grazyna to be a Board Member of Holy Family Services, I did not hesitate to accept. In my lifetime I have seen 'Marayong' transformed from the earliest visions of the post WW2 Polish migration and Sisters of the Holy Family, including Srs Godwin and Cassilda, to what it is today: Holy Family Services, while still maintaining that sense of Polish identity which is so important. We also need to acknowledge that Marayong, together with the Polish Clergy, Sisters of the Holy Family and Polish Migrants, is a major part of the local history of Blacktown and indeed Sydney.

As a High School teacher of thirty six years teaching experience, the last nineteen as Deputy Principal I hope to be able to bring my leadership, administrative, organisational, communication and interpersonal skills and experiences to the Board. As a Board Member, I will strive to uphold the Mission Statement, Board Policies and the collective 'vision' of Holy Family Services and its Directors, The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. ■

BY LESZEK MADRY



PROVINCIAL GATHERING

ON Thursday afternoon (2 October 2014), the sisters gathered at St. Joseph's Retreat and Conference Centre in Baulkham Hills for the Provincial Gathering. They looked forward to participating in common prayer, meals, and community recreation and spending one day in retreat silence.

Father Asaeli Raass SVD presented several sessions of talks on the topic of obedience and living out our vow of obedience. Father encouraged the group to become contemplative listeners to God, who uses many different voices to communicate with us. On Friday and Saturday evenings, Sister Grażyna Rocławska shared information and slide presentations about the International Planning Meeting she attended in Poland and the Ukraine.

Father Raass celebrated two of the three Masses over the weekend. He also celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the sisters.

On Sunday (5 October 2014), Father Philip Medlin CSSR, from CatholicCare Social Services celebrated the Mass. During the Mass the sisters renewed their vows. Later that morning, because one sister and her driver needed to leave early for the airport, the blessing of each other preceded the second session of the inclusive Provincial Chapter. The sisters discussed and approved the plan for preparation for the General Chapter. The group left the venue after lunch on Sunday afternoon. The next gathering is planned for February 2015. ■

BY SR JEAN WOJCIK



60 YEARS OF OUR LADY OF GRACE SCHOOL

SISTERS Anita Litwin and Joanna Zarzyczna flew to Perth to attend the 60 Anniversary of the beginning of Our Lady of Grace School in North Beach. The school organised several events throughout the week as part of their celebrations.

The start of the week saw the junior school show off their dancing skills in a concert for their parents.

On Wednesday, many distinguished guests were invited to join all past and present staff, students, parents and members of the parish and community, to celebrate a Thanksgiving Mass. Year 2 Gold lead the prayers and did the readings of the Mass. The students read beautifully and the school choir and liturgical dancers also made the Mass extra special. Sister Grażyna Rocławska, Provincial Superior, who unfortunately could not attend the celebrations, prepared a video to offer her congratulations to the School Community. Father Richard Smith, Parish Priest, posed the following question for the students and staff to ponder and discuss: What will the school be like in forty years' time when it celebrates its centenary? ■

BY SR JEAN WOJCIK



PRINCIPAL'S WORDS OF APPRECIATION

FOR 6½ years I have been principal of Our Lady of Grace School, North Beach, WA. Up until last year the school was owned by the Order and two sisters still work here.

The Sisters have imbued this school with their charism. As a result the school is widely known for the strength and vitality of its community of families. The school is also notable for its declaration that it "enrols whole families – not just individual children". The presence of two Sisters in the daily life of OLG is a constant reminder of the pastoral dimensions of the school:-

- Its support programs for students,
- Its Outreach program for school families needing short-term support,
- Our social justice initiatives supporting families beyond our immediate community, and
- The quick moral and financial response of our school community to support its members in times of need.

One of our Sisters is our School Chaplain and Counsellor, and as such, is a resource for our community members. My dream is that the active presence of the Sisters at OLG will extend well into the future. We are truly thankful and appreciative of the Sisters' presence at OLG. ■

BY CHRIS KENWORTHY



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GOD CALLING... WILL YOU ANSWER?



A FEW weeks ago, I met up with a good friend for coffee. While we were talking, I decided to tell him that I had been accepted to begin formation with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, and when I told him I was

immediately met with confusion and a very real shock, and then questions like: *Why would you want to do that? What will you do? What will you wear? and What does being a nun actually mean?*

Over the course of my journey, I have been asking myself these and many other questions. A week away from the commencement of my Affiliancy, I am still asking them. Being asked questions, and asking questions of myself – Why I want to follow this life?, What is calling me there? and Why I want to enter the Holy Family Sisters particularly? – has not thrown my vocation into doubt; rather, it has made things more concrete and clear, and has brought me to a much deeper understanding of myself, my desires, and of God's desires for me.

Religious life attracts me, because at its heart, I see the opportunity to give myself completely and unreservedly to God. When I first began actively considering religious life, this was one of the things that deeply called to me. I sensed within myself the need to enter into a deeper relationship with the Lord, and began to feel that as a religious I would be able to grow in the ways I felt He was asking me to. I also saw, through interactions with Sisters from several Congregations, that a religious has the power to reveal to others the beauty and depth of God's love for them, and I began to feel a call for me to do this through my own life and witness.

However, I won't deny that I wasn't completely accepting when I first began feeling like God was calling me to pursue religious life. In fact, at first I tried very hard to forget the idea. Religious life definitely wasn't something I wanted to consider, and so I tried desperately to push it out of my mind – but the thoughts and feelings wouldn't go away. And now, three years on, here I am. All I can really say is that

the Lord is very persistent!

Eventually I convinced myself that maybe these feelings would go away if I actually addressed them. I primarily worked on developing my prayer life, and from this I came to the realisation that my attraction to religious life was definitely not something I could ignore; instead, it seemed real and authentic, and just something I had to explore. So I began to research different Congregations. I came into contact with a few, and I think this definitely helped me to discern. I really don't think I would have been able to grow or discern as clearly without the great opportunities I had to research, learn, and spend time with different Sisters. Ultimately, I believe that for a Congregation to fit for a person, and for a person to fit with that Congregation, the mission, charism and ministry needs to call to the person's heart, to inspire work and service, and to draw them to a deeper love with the Lord and with those around them. As I got to know the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, I realised that this was, in fact, happening to me, and so I made the decision to apply with them.

Telling family and friends about my application, and about my acceptance, has met with a multitude of reactions. Some people have openly challenged me, assuming that my decision is simply based on insecurity, a fear of marriage or children, or a desire to "escape the world". Some have questioned me on my desires and motives, trying to see the point of pursuing religious life. And others – in fact, the majority – have been loving and supportive. These responses indicate to me that in this twenty-first century world, religious life is far from being irrelevant. While not everyone I've spoken to may agree with my decision to follow religious life, it is often something they want to discuss, "de-mystify" and understand. And although such discussion may not always be welcome, it is necessary for growth.

I will not deny that my journey thus far has been difficult. There have been doubts, periods of desolation, and at times very real fears. But, even in these more challenging times, I have experienced a consistent, deepening undercurrent of peace, love and relationship with God. I have felt that God is, in a very real sense, accompanying me on my journey; something that seems very fitting during the time of Advent and Christmas, when we welcome His presence among us. I am full of excitement – not simply to begin this new stage of my life, but to see where and how I am being called to love. This, in essence, is the deep beauty of vocation. ■

BY SOPHIE BOFFA

ACCEPTANCE OF AN AFFILIATE



THE Feast of the Holy Family is celebrated though out the Nazareth Community as a special day. However, the Sisters of Holy Spirit Province had a very

specific reason for rejoicing- the acceptance of Sophie Boffa to the Affiliancy. Sophie's family, parents and siblings, her PHD mentor and the sisters from the surrounding convents witnessed Sophie make her commitment to begin her discernment journey in our community in a simple prayer ceremony.

During the ceremony, Sophie lit three candles symbolizing the Holy Family, and she received three symbolic gifts from Sister Grażyna Rocławska, provincial superior: a lighted candle, symbolizing her baptismal commitment and the one she was making during the ceremony; the medal of the Holy Family which symbolized the charism of the Community and the JMJ prayer book, that unites the Sisters in their prayer and spirituality. After receiving these gifts, the new affiliate was presented to her special companion on this part of her journey- Sister Małgorzata Kozub, Director of Vocations and Affiliancy.

After the inspirational prayer service, light refreshments of home-made cakes, cups of gelatine with fruit and whipped cream, coffee and tea were served. An interesting activity occurred during this time together. Sister Grażyna Rocławska asked the sisters to share one of their memories of the day they entered Nazareth as either affiliate or postulant. Before the sharing began, sisters from Perth were able to welcome Sophie through Skype contact. After the sisters shared their memory, the family shared their special memories of their feelings and thoughts about Sophie's decision to enter the Affiliancy programme.

Sophie will begin a lived in experience with the sisters at Our Lady Queen of Poland in February. ■

BY SISTER JEAN WOJCIK



TIME OF GRACE

GOD’S grace reaches us in many ways. Every moment of our lives is time of God’s grace even though we don’t see that.

The time is passing quickly; the life is full surprises and gives the opportunity for growing. This year I had privilege to participate in six months program called “Journeying with New Members” at Marymount Centre in Castle Hill. And that time was for me a special time of God’s grace in my life.

The program was for those who are engaged in formation or who are being prepared for this ministry. It provided Formators with an opportunity to get not only some new skills and knowledge but most of all to enrich their own spiritual life. The participants came from Malaysia, Vietnam, Pakistan, PNG and Australia.

There are three main goals identified as essential to the Program:

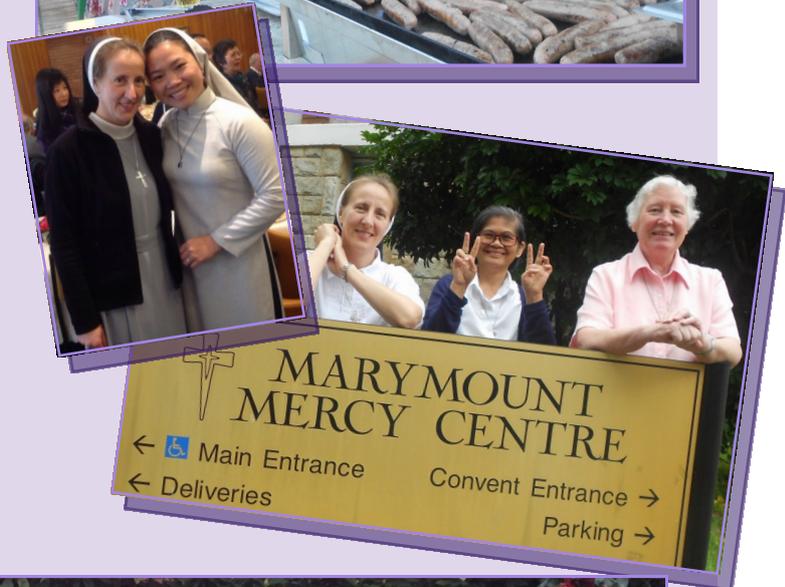
- Emphasis on supporting the growth of participants towards personal and spiritual integration
- Emphasis on the physical, emotional and mental well-being of participants as well as on their spiritual and professional growth
- Awareness of the need for opportunities for developing improved communication and accompanying skills.

Personally I feel much enriched and renewed spiritually. The program was really full of great experiences. Leaving and building the community with people from different countries and culture was something significant and powerful. We shared

our stories, learnt from each other and enjoyed being together. The time spent at Marymount Centre already has born some good fruits in my life. And I hope some seeds planted in my heart will bear fruits in the future in their own time/proper time.

I am grateful for many graces and friendships I received during that special time. I experienced once again how God is generous with His love. He never stops to surprise us and showing the way to grow in His Love.■

BY SR MARGARET (MALGORZATA KOZUB)



60 YEARS OF MARAYONG PHOTO-STORY



The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth is an international apostolic congregation founded in 1875. Sisters live and serve in 170 communities in 13 countries on 5 continents. The Generalate is located in Rome, Italy. ■

SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH



Generalate of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Rome, Italy



Donations towards the places of our Congregation which are in need of your support can be made by cheque or Direct Transfer .

Kindly make cheques out to the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and send to POBox 8142, Blacktown, NSW, Australia or directly to:

BANK: Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Blacktown Branch
 Account Name: Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth Mission Fund
 BSB: 062121
 Account No: 10920857

60 YEARS OF MARAYONG PHOTO-STORY



SISTER Barbara Majcher celebrated her 75th Birthday on 2 January 2015. Sister Barbara Majcher is awesome! She drives a car; works in the garden; prepares monthly dinners for the seniors citizens club; turns up daily for community prayers and Mass; takes bus trips and excursions almost weekly and makes a monthly pilgrimage to Berrima to the Shrine of our Lady every First Saturday. The community wished her many more happy years to come. ■



GOD OF ALL TIMES

GOD is a generous giver! One who always make His presence known by way of giving unceasingly and without reserve! However, God also respects our readiness and the freedom to accept His gifts and generosity. Year 2014 was a year marked by God's generosity and providence in my life. Having witnessed God's marvelous gifts manifested around me in people, events and situations, I can only say "Thank you, God!" This past year presented me an enormous opportunity for growth, determination, and joy. I had a privilege to journey with amazing youth at Mary Queen of the Family Parish (St. Patrick's). I must say they enriched me with greater enthusiasm, joy and faith. Their dedication to the life of the Parish is I'm sure not only visible to me but also for the rest of the parish community. There are two unique youth groups at Mary Queen of the Family Parish (St Pat's) VITA (Life), from Year 7-10 and the YAMAD (Youth Always Making A Difference) is from Year 11 up. Some of the highlights of my time spent with the youth were very uplifting. I had a chance to organize a Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, and I joined the youth on the Good Friday walk from Mary Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown up to the St. Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta with hundreds of youth and congregations from other Parishes. Other activities included the winter sleep-out for St. Vinnie's, BBQ fundraising for different organizations and events sponsored and supported by the Parish. I had the joy of working, planning, worshipping and faith sharing with these amazing people especially during our youth leaders' formation at Mulgoa; the "Relay for Life" for Cancer Council; just to name two. I am grateful, thankful and blessed to have the privileged of working with young people of Mary Queen of the Family Parish (St.Pat's) indeed, it was an awesome adventure!

Also, 2014 provided a great opportunity for me to engage in studying CPE- Clinical Pastoral Education. This nineteen week course deepened my awareness and understanding. It taught me to reflect and have an appreciation, as well as, find purpose and meaning in what my role as a chaplain. During the course I had the chance of meeting some zealous and skilled people in the area of pastoral work.

Working with dedicated and supportive colleagues, in the Chaplaincy department at the Westmead and Blacktown Hospitals, created a space for my learn-

ing and growth both spiritually and professionally. So without a doubt, God is a great giver and a provider. We might feel overwhelmed at times but as time unfolds God's obvious blessings will reveal when our heart is ready to embrace all as a gift! ■

BY SR RITA APURA



SPECIAL GIFT

IN the beginning of Advent some sisters and I participated in a day retreat for religious and priests with Fr Jacques Phillipe. Meeting him was a special gift for me. Why? Because... Twenty years ago I bought his book “Time for God” and from the beginning I loved it. I could say that Fr Jacques through his writing was my spiritual guide. After twenty years I met my “Guide” personally. It was really unforgettable moment. When I shared my little story with him he laughed so do I. Of course I asked him to sign his book which I still have with me.

I also went for his talk during a women’s retreat at the Notre Dame University. How I could miss it?

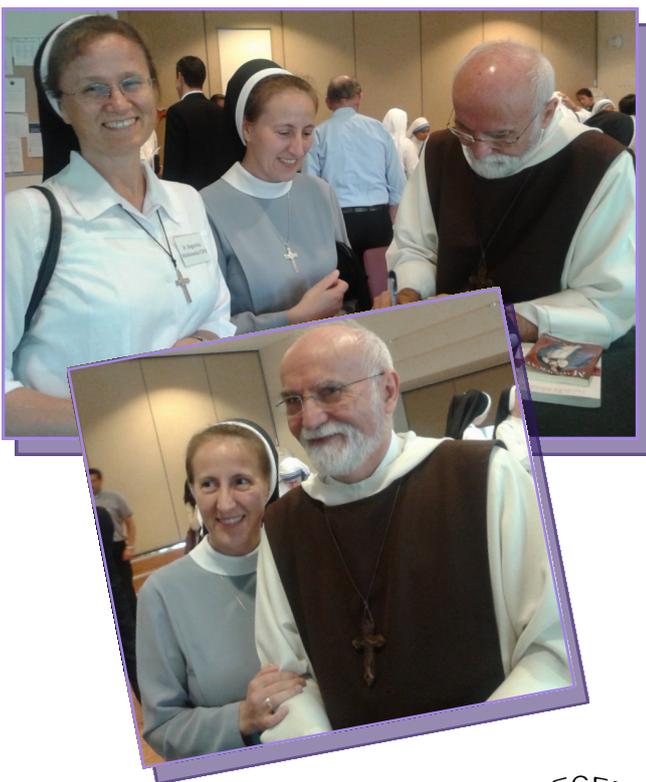
I love his simplicity and profoundness in his writing. I think that struck me the most.

He points clearly what is really matter in spiritual life and gives simple and concrete directions.

I would like to cite his word from “Time for God” when he wrote about faith in God’s presence during our prayer.

“Regardless of what we may or may not feel, the preparation we have or haven’t made; how good we are or aren’t at stringing beautiful thoughts together – regardless of our whole inner state- God is there, with us, looking at us and loving us. He is not because we deserve him or feel his presence, but because he gave his promise (Mt6:6)” ■

BY SR MARGARET (MALGORZATA KOZUB)



NEW EXPERIENCES IN MINISTRY

I HAVE worked in a volunteer capacity at St Patrick’s Primary School in Cessnock for the last term of 2014. At the beginning I learnt many things from teachers as I followed them around from one activity to another. I did what they asked and showed me how something was done. At first it was difficult because of the different accents and the language used. However I assisted one teacher to help children who had difficulties with reading or a whole class to work on Lexia—computers’ language program. I helped children from Kindergarten to read simple English words or numbers and to do some Christmas craft. I watched how Gabbi, the school’s Pastoral Carer, gave support to children, who were grieving at the death of somebody from their families. Gabbi used a program called “Seasons for Growth. Individually I worked with children to help them solve friendship difficulties and to help them work through their sadness or anger. Together we did some Christmas craft and during this time, we spoke about their issues and the best way these could be resolved. It works very well! Four boys (two of the boys have Polish parents and they invited two friends to join them) asked if I would teach them Polish. On Tuesdays I went with either Sisters Anita or Christine to their respective schools to observe the Sisters working. I think last term was a major learning curve for me even though it appeared that the teachers were grateful for my presence. To tell you the truth, I think got more from this experience than I gave. I have always loved working with children and youth. And I missed this ministry more than I realized. Now, I am very happy that I have been given the opportunity to experience how schools in Australia support and educate the young. I am aware that I still have problem with understanding and confidence in using the language but I strongly believe that one day.....!!!! ■

BY SR BOGUMILA MALIKOWSKA



MINISTRY TO FAMILY THROUGH LIFELINE



TWO years ago I began my journey with Lifeline as a volunteer Personal and Relationship Counsellor providing face-to-face counselling service within Newcastle and Hunter districts. The idea was introduced to me by a school psychologist who had been helping me in the process of obtaining my registration as a provisional registered psychologist. Initially, the thought of being able to help others while gaining experience through a highly respected organisation enticed me to try my luck with Lifeline.

Lifeline has stringent screening process for volunteers in this position. However, after completing a 12 week LLNH (Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter) course in Advanced Counselling Skills and Suicide Prevention Skills training, I was given a position at the main counselling office. Early this year I was given the privilege to continue the face-to-face counselling service in one of Lifeline's outreach areas.

Sharing with Lifeline's mission "to support the community and people experiencing difficulty through accessible, effective counselling, education and referral services" is an honour. Not only had I gain counselling experience, I also owe so much more than I gave to my clients, and my co-counsellors, who were only willing to offer their support to me.

I am looking forward to continue working with

Lifeline with anticipation as I take my first clients for couples counselling real soon. I am apprehensive about taking up couples counselling as I am worried that I won't be able to fully understand where my clients are coming from given the different life experiences I have from them. I also believe that I don't really need to understand but be open and accept them as they are.

To have an opportunity to minister to families through counselling is a hidden dream of mine. The challenges that many families have to face this days makes me believe that now is the right time for me to listen to the desire that God has given me. I know that I will never be a perfect personal or couple's counsellor, but I can be God's instrument. Every day I ask the Holy Spirit the true Counsellor to work through me so that it will no longer be me working with my clients but God working through me. ■

BY SR CHRISTINE RAMADA

Sr Christine with Mayor Peter Blackmore receiving an Australian Citizen on 30 July 2014 in Maitland Art Gallery.



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HOPE, GRIEF AND LOSS



HOPE is a firm assurance regarding things that are unclear and unknown. Hope is a fundamental component of the life of the righteous, without hope, life loses its meaning. The righteous; who have this trustful hope in God, have a general confidence in God's protection and help ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)) and are free from fear and anxiety ([Psalm 46:2-3](#)). The first word of hope is 'The Lord is good. Indeed, the Lord is good to those who trust, that is who 'wait in hope for Him'. God's very nature is goodness. He brings hope to our pain and suffering.

In childbirth, the joy is obvious, but in the passing of a loved one, the concept of joy may not be so apparent. For a patient with a belief in an afterlife, joy may come in the form of leaving a body of suffering into a world of peace or leaving this world to join loved ones in the world to follow. But sometimes joy comes unexpectedly, especially to family members, who have to make difficult decisions. Mourning affects us all differently. Some people need to work to keep themselves occupied to avoid the pain. In some cases this may work; however, to suppress the feeling is not healthy either.

Embracing death, death of any kind not just the physical death, brings hope. Dying to oneself certainly brings healing, if this is done in consciousness of heart and dependence on God. If there is hope, healing comes, as well as there is joy after the pain. Death is inevitable part of human experience, we are all going to approach our death one day or the death of our loved ones, and yet why it is so overwhelming? Why is it so painful? Where is hope? How the person can find hope in grieving? As Kubler-Ross (2011) indicated in her theory the 5 stages of grief: "*Shock and denial, pain and guilt, anger and bargaining, depression and loneliness, acceptance and healing*". Time is an important aspect of grief. For the bereaved, time stands still, weighs heavily, it passes and it heals. One day as I was called to pray for the man who only passed away minutes ago. I arrived into a room and was greeted by a teary wife who lovingly sat beside her husband's body saying, 'sister, I may never 'get over' his death, but I am sure I will learn to live with the absence of him, whom I love dearly. Such a powerful words, words of hope, of ac-

ceptance and of peace. Words that will continue to enrich me to appreciate the ministry I do. Grief is a powerful teacher. It takes us on an inward journey. As with any journey, there are rough roads along the way. However, with God's help, there is hope and with an honest desire to move forward, progress will eventually become real and hope means simply the belief that something good lies ahead. Hope resembles courage more than cheerfulness. It involves a leap, life faith. 'Hope that is seen is no hope at all' according to St. Paul. 'Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently' ([Romans 8:24 – 25](#)). To some of us and especially in our contemporary society where to pause to reflect, and to stop and ponder what is in front of us and around us is becoming more challenging, so to wait patiently for healing comes is difficult to attain. Listening to God's voice is vital. I believe a hope for healing should be presented realistically. It is just that – a "hope" not a guarantee. If it comes, a joyous miracle has happened. If it doesn't come, God has not let you down. He can use even the infirmity to produce good. He does promise that, without fail. To live well with grief means to be at peace with my present and my past. Peace of mind is a great treasure and if I continuously seek it, prayers will strengthen what I hope for. Lastly, death and change creates loss...The pain from loss is called grief! There will be stormy times and calm times!!! ■

BY SR RITA APURA

Sr Rita completed the nineteen week CPE (Clinical Pastoral Experience) course that was held at St. Vincent in Sydney, NSW.

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GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN PALLIATIVE CARE



I WOULD like to express my gratitude to the Sisters for the opportunity to study. On 17 December 2014 I completed Graduate Certificate in Palliative Care from Flinders University in Adelaide through distance study because I live in Sydney. The course contained four units. It took two years (very slow paces) to complete because I undertook only one unit per semester. This online course was studied between my ministry and other daily tasks. In my ministry as a nurse caring for the elderly and chronically ill people where medicine cannot offer cure questions arise: “What can we health care professionals offer?”. This course opened a path for better understanding, exploring of possibilities for a person-centered care as well for my personal reflection on death and dying. Again, I would like to thank all the sisters for their support which I received during that time. ■

BY SR ALICJA DRABIK

DIPLOMA IN AGEING AND PASTORAL CARE

GRADUATING with a Diploma in Ageing and Pastoral Care from Holy Family Services is a proud moment.

It is the culmination of nearly two years of classes and assignments. During these I learnt a lot about the various characteristics of Ageing, including dementia, grief and loss, as well as, the many facets of Pastoral Care; in particular the value of presence, silence and listening.

I am very grateful to Holy Family Services for providing this course, which I have greatly enjoyed and regularly applied to my Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy work. ■

BY JULIE STRATTON

WORKING AT HOLY FAMILY SERVICES

Jim Psirakis was recently promoted to Operations Manager of Holy Family Services. He runs the day to day operations and Mr. Kevin Rocks CEO is his mentor. At one of the meetings Jim was asked, “Why do you like working at Holy Family Services”. His response captures what most workers at the Services feel about the establishment.

“I felt an immediate connection with Holy Family Services as early as my first interview. There was an overwhelming sense of family and warmth which I was very drawn to, and knew that I wanted the next stage of my career to be at Holy Family Services. I enjoy the interactions with staff and residents and can see the genuine love the staff have for our residents. I feel that my work and contribution to the organisation is valued and appreciated by management and staff, which makes coming to work each day that much more fulfilling and satisfying. I honestly feel blessed to have been given an opportunity to work and grow with Holy Family Services and will continue to do what I can to make a positive contribution”.■

BY JIM PSIRAKIS



TEEN SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMME

EVERY two years the Our Lady's Community and the Mary Immaculate Parish work together on facilitating a sacramental programme for interested girls. In 2014 eight girls from Year 8 to Year 11 took the opportunity of becoming full members of the Catholic community. The sacramental programme took place over ten afternoons after school at the parish office and students learnt about the concept of sacrament and the specific sacraments they would be receiving. It was a flexible programme, covering students who required all sacraments, some sacraments or even one sacrament. Part of the programme involved the opportunity to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation with Father Adrian Sharp at Mary Immaculate church. The afternoon sessions began with some input from Sister Maureen Stempko, parish associate, or staff of Our Lady's College. This was followed by some activities and lively discussions of the topics. The girls all grew in confidence to share and discuss their ideas, and they offered wisdom and insights to the group. The programme culminated at a Parish Eucharistic celebration with the Father Adrian celebrating the sacraments with the girls. The families and Our Lady's community are very appreciative of Mary Immaculate Parish providing this ministry. ■

BY LINDA BRANDENBURG

Linda is an Assistant Principal Religious Education in Annerley, QLD, working closely with Sr Maureen Joseph Stempko.



THE ENDING AND THE BEGINNING

THE Holy Family Polish Ethnic School has been operating since 1957 serving those families who want their children to be bilingual or simply sustaining the language of their parents and grandparents. For the past 10 years, it was also one of my ministries which was giving me the joy and an opportunity to continue to be a teacher. I am very pleased that I was able to pass on the responsibility for the teaching and running of the school to our newcomer, Sr Agnieszka Misiak. I would like to express my gratitude to many teachers who helped me over the years, especially Grazyna Konarska. May the school grow! Powodzenia! ■

BY SR GRACE (GRAZYNA ROCLAWSKA)



LET THEIR LIFE SPEAK

THE Associates of the Holy Family met for the last meeting of 2014 in the meeting room of Our Lady Queen of Poland Convent in Marayong. Father Noel Connolly SSC continued his presentation of the “Francis Effect” and celebrated Mass with the group. After Mass the group enjoyed a catered lunch. “What do you like most about the Association? Why do you come to meetings?” were the two survey questions posed to the participating Associates. Below are the responses received from members of the group.

- Mary said, “To be able to pray together. I feel I was born to come.” Meetings were like events. “I enjoy meeting up with the other associates. Enjoy the prayer time.”
- Another Associate wrote, “What I like most about the Association is the opportunity to meet and chat with the Sisters and Associates. The meetings are always inspirational, and we have the opportunity to know and see what happens in other provinces of the Congregation.”
- “It is an opportunity to support the Sisters’ work and hear about the sisters’ work elsewhere in the world.”
- Mary finds the participants to be “friendly, welcoming and we have fun in between the serious side – prayer and reflection. And yes, the lunch and morning tea are wonderful too.”
- John and Pat attend meetings to “maintain contact with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. We will be forever grateful for their pastoral care for our family.”
Attending meetings helps them “to keep contact with other members of the Association. Unfortunately we are dependent on others for transport to Sydney”.
- Margaret and Denis believe that “we are “kindred souls” share the same ideals; supported by the example provided by the sisters.” “We feel honoured to be invited to the meetings. You always make us feel very welcome. Our connection with the sisters goes back 40 years when St. Jude’s opened. (The school celebrates its 40th anniversary next year). We like to keep in touch. We reflect on the example of the Holy Family.”
- Finally Joan sums up her reasons by saying that she attends gatherings for “Meeting up with the nuns and all

the other associates and praying together. What I like most about the Association is as above even though I find it quite difficult to get to meetings as I have a very large family and with helping them out I do not have much free time. I feel sure that being Associates of the Holy Family our dedication is to our own families.”

In 2015, the Church will celebrate the Year of Consecrated Life. Not only will associates deepen their understanding about the lives of the Sisters, they will deepen their own consecration of married life and their baptismal commitment. ■

BY ASSOCIATES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

MOURNING THE LOSSES OF FRIEND AND ASSOCIATE

LAST months of 2014, brought us some sad news. Patricia Griffiths (Sydney Associate) rang to tell us about the death of her beloved husband Patrick. This sad fact was communicated throughout the Sisters and Associate communities. A couple of weeks later, the news of the death of an Associate followed.

On 4 October 2014, Mrs Patricia Margaret Embleton, one of the first Associates of the Holy Family in New South Wales died suddenly. Patricia’s funeral was held the morning of 10 October 2014 at 10:00 am in St. Andrew’s Church in Marayong. Father Jolly Chacko celebrated the liturgy. Sisters Grażyna Rocławska, Jean Wojcik, Alicja Drabik and Lois Ann Richardi joined about two hundred friends, and family members to celebrate Patricia’s life and give thanksgiving to God for the wonderful gift she was to everyone who knew her. Sister Lois Ann Richardi accompanied the funeral cortege to Pinegrove Memorial Park where Patricia was buried.

May Patrick and Patricia rest in peace. ■

BY SR JEAN WOJCIK



THE SOUND OF SILENCE

In the depths of my heart
 There is fear, there is horror
 Unstoppable motion, unsettling emotion
 Thirsting for calmness and of peace
 Bewildered spirit and sense of weariness.

In the gathering of the clouds
 The chaos of the waves
 Breeze strikes; north, south, west and east
 Trees, birds loudly chattering and chirping
 Sounds around me are overwhelming
 But the noises inside me are more terrifying...

The questions of how and why baffled me,
 Maybe it is normal, maybe it is given
 I am sure in seconds, the time will transform
 Conform the way, obvious there would be some
 delay.
 However, Hope would be the key to sustain what
 seems uneasy.

The Sound of Silence
 It is a gift, it is healing, and it is peace.
 A journey back to the core of my existence...
 Feeling the pain the sacredness of my being.
 And the reality of life's roller coaster that cannot
 be hidden.

The Sound of Silence
 The voice of God, His footsteps and His love,
 It touches the heart, embraces us when we are hurt
 Inviting us freely, lovingly and joyfully.

So, who am I to resist?
 Who am I to contradict and object?
 To the one who wrote the history?
 Who owned my past, present memory
 Who directs my future to be.

Fear not of the sheer sound of silence...
 Because God reveals himself in the quietness of
 our being
 He is vulnerable, sensible and respectful
 To where we are on our journey
 And only presents us the freedom and fidelity
 As he look at us with Love,
 Compassion and Mercy.

LITTLE SNOWDROP

The world may never notice
 If a Snowdrop doesn't bloom,
 Or even pause to wonder
 If the petals fall too soon.

But every life that ever forms,
 Or ever comes to be,
 Touches the world in some small way
 For all eternity.

Maria Rose, the little one we longed for
 Was swiftly here and gone,
 But the love that you instilled and then planted
 Is a light that still shines on.

And though our arms are empty,
 Our hearts know what to do.
 For every beating of our hearts
 Says that we love you.

Maria Rose, you filled our hearts with joy,
 You touched our senses so special it blooms
 You have walked on this beautiful world
 No one have ever walked on now and before. ■

BY SR RITA APURA



**Attribute to Maria Rose,
 whose beautiful life have
 touched so many, 5 Octo-
 ber 2014)**

MOTHER IS WELL PLEASED

SISTERS of the Holy Family of Nazareth is an International Order of Sisters, founded by Mother Frances Siedliska, dedicated to service the community. This is how I came to know the Sisters. We decided to take a four year old boy from the Children's home for the Christmas holiday. On arriving at the Children's Home back in 1966, I witnessed a police car leaving the premises. One of the sisters came out to meet me with an infant in her arms, and I remarked that I did not know the Children's Home took in such small infants. But this was a special case. Something terrible had happened to the family and the Police knew that the Sisters always offered a safe and loving haven to the families in need. I could tell Sister was no stranger to caring for babies. Before I came to work for the Sisters in 1973, I learned from many members of the community the great work the sisters were doing. Sisters from Poland, and the USA who had to adjust to the overwhelming heat in summer, driving on the other side of the road, and in some cases a language they did not fully understand. The Sisters were greatly respected by the Police Department and the community at large, because they were always receptive to people in need, and in particular children. Their doors and arms were always open to children in need. Can you imagine giving up your life style and committing to sacrifice and to dedicate your life to others? When I started as secretary at the school in 1973, the then Superior, Sister Cassilda, would come and visit the principal, Sister Elda Marie, and she always had two little ones from the Children's Home. They held her hands or clung to her skirts. It was a beautiful sight to witness the love these little ones had for her. She became the first Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth, to be buried on Australian soil. Many people

visited the school with their troubles. Sister Tullia, the principal from 1974-1984, fed, clothed, counselled many a student and parents. As did the succeed principal, Sister Irene, Sister Carol, and of course our present principal Dr. John. The sisters were an inspiration to work for and with. They were never adversed to hard manual work. They battled governments, councils and at times people they should never have had to battle to achieve what is standing on the 116-132 Quakers Road premises. When Pope John Paul II was elected Pope the sisters were given a visit to Rome and an audience with the Pope. I saw the photographs of that visit and I was overjoyed at the look on their faces, I know they could never be repaid for their work, but I felt that this was a little reward for them. The sisters have been a sanctuary for the community and their work both currently and previously with Solo Parents, Pastoral Care at Plumpton, and with the ethnic communities, such as, the Polish, Chinese and Filipino communities; their chaplaincy work at Mulawa Women's Prison and the University of Western Sydney, Their involvement in the Couples for Christ and the Singles for Christ. Other works for the sisters included the Out of School Care at Marayong, Brother Albert's Aged Care People's Home, the Holy Family Polish Nursing Home and Blessed Frances Retirement Village. Their work in establishing and administering the schools in various states, giving staff and students spiritual direction, and guiding them through retreats, will be remembered by many of the people they have helped over their years of service to the community. The Sisters always respond to the needs of the community. I am sure Mother Francis Siedliska's vision has been achieved by our Sisters, and she is well pleased. ■

BY RHONDA McKECHNIE

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CONTRIBUTORS

Sr Grażyna ROCLAWSKA, Bp Kevin MANNING, Sr Jean WOJCIK, Leszek MADRY, Chris KENWORTHY, Sophie BOFFA, Sr Małgorzata KOZUB, Sr Rita APURA, Sr Bogumila MALIKOWSKA, Sr Christine RAMADA, Sr Alicja DRABIK, Julie STRATTON, Jim PSIRAKIS, Linda BRANDENBURG, ASSOCIATES of the HOLY FAMILY, Rhonda McKENCHIE

PHOTOS

Victor SKRZYPIEC, Leszek MADRY, Sr Jean WOJCIK, Sr Małgorzata KOZUB, Sr Paula VOLCHEK, Sr Rita APURA, Julie STRATTON, Sr Maureen Joseph STEMPKO, Joanna PISANI, Sr Grażyna ROCLAWSKA

PROOFREADER

Sr Jean WOJCIK