



Loreto Friends *Networker*

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Issue 13
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Dear Friends

Easter carries the deepest message of our faith: God's love can break through even after experiences of death and failure that seem to be the end.

It requires faith to hang on to hope when our dreams have been laid to waste. Jesus' cry 'Why have you forsaken me?' can often find an echo in our hearts in the midst of tragedy and pain.

Yet Christians hold that Love can triumph. That sounds so simplistic when one has lost a loved one, or in the face of disasters like Haiti or Chile, yet this thin thread of light shines down the tunnel of loss: somehow, somewhere, God is in the pain with us. On the cross God is present as the vulnerable, broken one.

The experience of the disciples shows a gradual dawning of awareness that in the time following that traumatic event, somehow they came to realise it was not the end: in some new way this person Jesus was among them, opening them to possibilities of life and hope.

Maybe this Easter we can find time to reflect on our own lives, on the new understandings and new meanings that have come to us after bleak periods when we thought no good



could happen. We might be able to enter into the truth underlying this celebration. When this faith is expressed as a superficial word at the wrong time, it brings no healing. But when it is forged from our own experience, in dialogue with the Gospel, it can enable us as Christians to witness to hope in a world of despair.

In this edition we share with you stories from our wider Loreto family—not just our sisters, but our networks of volunteers, fellow women, past students and teachers that keep the spirit of Mary Ward alive:

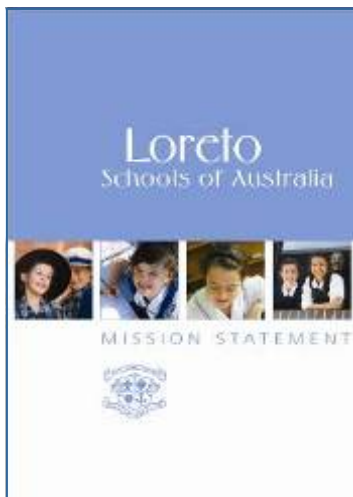
- **Our volunteers**—A recently returned MWIA volunteer shares her experiences
- **Our sisters**—Lizzie Donnan (pictured above) and her work in Zambia; Marg

Finlay and her work as a prison chaplain; Ellen Moran and her recent award for her work in Three Springs

- **Inspiring women** who are furthering their studies with the aid of Mary Ward Grants
- **Our teachers, staff and sisters working together as the Loreto Schools Australia Committee**—who have done a brilliant job in updating the Loreto Schools Mission booklet
- **Our historians, committees and friends through the telling of our story**—another wonderful review of 'Loreto in Australia'
- **Our school leadership teams** with an overview of our recent Loreto Leadership conference.

Christine Burke ibvm

Loreto Schools Leadership Conference March 2010



“To do ordinary things well—that is Verity”

Mary Ward

“See the wisdom of the young and give them the opportunity to be heard”

Carmel Dunne

“There is nothing ordinary about ordinary things—they lead onto so much more”

Michael McGirr

The Loreto Schools Leadership Conference was held recently, hosted by Loreto Marryatville. School leadership teams came together for a weekend of conversation, sharing and reflection on the shared mission of Loreto schools.

I felt privileged to attend the first day of the national conference which is held every three years. This year there was a particular emphasis on deepening our understanding of the charism of Mary Ward with a focus on *verity*.

The tranquil surrounds of the college and the beautiful musical and vocal welcome by the students set the scene for three days of inspiration and reflection on our professional and personal lives and the opportunity to build networks and friendships.

Christine Burke ibvm Provincial Leader, spoke on *verity* and keeping truth in our schools alive today. She spoke about the future of leadership in our schools, particularly the reshaping of the national education board.

The parts that resonated with me included, “Truth has many sides to it” and “our experiences in life shape the truth that we see”. We were asked to turn to the person next to us and share what ‘spoke’ to us from Chris’ presentation. For me it was this Mary Ward quote, “To do ordinary things well—that is verity”.

Seated in the Junior Hall, we were surrounded by beautiful visual aspects of the students’ perceptions of *verity*. The Mary Ward collage, a collection of individual students’ artistic impressions fitting to-

gether to form the image of Mary Ward was particularly moving. I couldn’t help but focus on these beautiful unique depictions of freedom, justice, verity and sincerity as I listened to the presentations. I was drawn to the wall-art defining verity: “Finding out who we are; Being true to ourselves; To be all we can be.”

Carmel Dunne, outgoing Principal Loreto Coorparoo, gave us warm, beautiful and uplifting insights on what she holds dear of Loreto leadership. She spoke about how personal experience builds compassion and understanding of others. “Enter empathy without losing perspective and dignity and find grace in each task”. She shared her encounters of grace through photographs of simple small details through to abstract bold artworks and compared these with scripture.

Carmel emphasised the importance of seeing the wisdom of the young and giving youth the opportunity to be heard. She reflected on her experiences as a Loreto principal as being a ‘revolving door’ experience - ‘a glorious wondrous joy to be a part of the lives of the girls’.

Michael McGirr, head of Faith and Mission at St Kevin’s College was a guest presenter throughout the three day conference.

He communicated the essence of Ignatian spirituality in a way that was relevant and accessible to everyone. He spoke of Ignatian spirituality as a ‘device for decluttering, helping people find

freedom, and finding simple truth in our experiences’. He highlighted the patience and openness required in leadership in schools and how to learn to respond to the unexpected.

On days two—three participants moved to the Barossa Valley and were treated to a series of presentations and workshops by Chris Burke ibvm, Michael McGirr, Libby Rogerson ibvm and Deirdre Browne ibvm.

Libby Rogerson, Executive Officer of MWIA, gave a presentation on a joint MWIA and JPIC project with schools that is assisting Santa Teresa School in Alice Springs, thus displaying *verity* in action.

Deirdre Browne took participants on a journey through her experiences in updating the IBVM Constitutions. She provided insights into the different sections of the modern document by drawing on the spirituality of Mary Ward and the words in action in this important guiding document for ibvms around the world.

The Loreto Schools Mission Statement has been beautifully updated by the Loreto Schools Australia Committee (LSAC) and is available through our Loreto schools (pictured above left).

Special thanks were extended to Jacky Hamilton who co-ordinated the update and all the staff, teachers and sisters involved in the original (1998) and revised (2010) edition.

By Sophia Ljaskevic

My Role as Chaplain Within a Women's Prison

An excerpt from a reflection by Marg Finlay ibvm

I began as a Catholic Chaplain in the Bandyup Women's Prison in October 2004. What was expected of me in this new role would unfold as I became familiar and more comfortable with life within a secure women's prison.

My previous experience as a Loreto Sister had provided me with many opportunities to develop skills as a teacher of both primary and secondary students. I spent several years working within adult education teams, as leader of a developing Catholic Community; had facilitated women's conversation circles, was comfortable with interfaith dialogue and had studied a Masters in Pastoral Studies in Chicago.

Each of these experiences had required me to interact with different people as they negotiated the ups and downs of life's journey.

Coming into the Prison Chaplaincy would call upon much of what I had learned in the past and yet in this new position I would learn so much more.

During the first six months or so, I followed in the footsteps of an experienced Sister who had been working within the prison system for about 25 years. I observed how she interacted with the women. How she listened, supported, encouraged and challenged. Slowly, I was able to bring my own experience and personal

skills into my role as chaplain.

Recently, I attended a National Conference on Ministry at which a young author, Alice Nelson, delivered a keynote address. I was taken and challenged by her reflections on a question she posed, "How can a global civilisation with a heart be created?"

She said, "There is an equally strong set of needs that we call spiritual or meaning needs: people want their lives to have some higher meaning... they want their lives to be connected to something about which they can feel that it has transcendent value... they hunger for personal relationships, families and communities in which they can experience themselves as being cared for and recognised in all of their specificity and uniqueness and spiritual beauty – not only for what they can 'deliver' or 'do' for others... but simply because they are valuable and deserving of love and caring just for who they are as embodiments of the sacred...."

"As Church – (and in our ministry as chaplains), we are an intentional group of people who see ourselves as allies to each other in advancing this way of thinking, people who are unashamedly utopian and willing to fight for their highest ideals, yet unashamedly humble in knowing that we don't know all that we need to know to do the healing that needs to be done."

So, what do I consider are essential aspects of the ministry of a Catholic chaplain in women's prison?

I would like to start with the need and responsibility we have to familiarise ourselves with Prison Policy, Vision and the Strategic Plan, for example, the most recent Background Paper, Women's Way Forward (July 2009) - which leads into the Women's Corrective Services Strategic Plan 2009-2012.

This document provides us with disturbing facts e.g. the over representation of Aboriginal women in custody and that programs must reflect the cultural and social realities for women. We must respect and value each woman as an expert on her own life and for Aboriginal women, their membership of a community.

We need to encourage women to learn from one another and view them as survivors as opposed to victims and foster their strength and creativity to help effect change in their lives.

As a chaplain, I consider moving around the prison and taking the women where and as I find them, is the most appropriate way to engage with them. Conversation may be nothing more than a simple greeting. In this way, they come to trust and have confidence in us.

Compassion, empathy, listening, encouraging and challenging form a significant part of what I consider is the ministry of the chaplain within the prison.

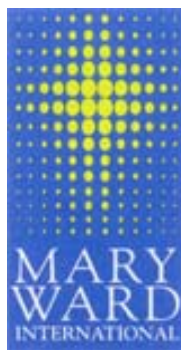


Above: Marg Finlay

"Programs must reflect the cultural and social realities for women."

I am grateful for those whom I have been able to help along the way and for those who have taught me that "there but for the grace of God go I".

For the full article please visit 'What we do' on the Loreto Sisters website or: <http://www.loreto.org.au/works/index.html>



India – A Place of Challenges and Possibilities

*Volunteering reflections
by Clare Condon*

When I think of India, my first recollection is always of the jumbled vibrancy, colour and energy I saw throughout the journey - in the Loreto sisters teaching in a small classroom to the tea plantation workers picking leaves in the vast fields of green, in small rural villages as well as in the hectic streets of Calcutta.

Two close friends and I were based in the rapidly growing city of Siliguri, the gateway to the mountain village of Darjeeling in the Northeast of India. As we arrived in the midst of the monsoon season, the days were hot and humid, mostly around 30 degrees. The drenching rainfall was definitely foreign to us coming from Melbourne, where even heavy rain in winter can be a novelty.

During our stay in the Mary Ward Social Centre in Siliguri, we were lucky enough to travel to three Loreto missions. I say lucky because our trips were coordinated around mudslides and road closures as well as political instability, which closed regions completely for weeks at a time.

Our journeys to the Loreto missions were adventures in themselves, and through these trips I came to realise that India's large population is something you experience physically. We felt it in auto taxis, as we



squeezed into the arm, shoulder or leg of a stranger. We felt it in jeep rides with 15 other lucky passengers and we definitely felt it on our seven hour ride to Nepal in an overflowing, rickety bus. These crowds were never angry or embarrassed at the reality of shared space, and I often contrasted our long journeys to any typical Melbourne train ride. Rather than feeling disconnected, annoyed or isolated, I found these crowds affable and understanding of the trials of long trips.

The three missions we travelled to were in the towns of Panighatta, Lolay and Dharan. We saw the schools and students, the medical facilities and the community building projects which are coordinated and implemented by the Loreto sisters. During these trips, we often found ourselves walking in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains, through dense greenery, down steep rocky paths and alongside small streams. We met Loreto sisters and teach-

ers, as well as beautiful, loud kids who often stared at us intently.

India is known as a place of great poverty yet I think our trip, particularly being involved with the work of Mary Ward International Australia*, gave us an insight into the possibilities which emerge despite large challenges. Entrenched poverty, exploitation and female disempowerment are being tackled through small initiatives in local settings, and our time at each of the Loreto missions allowed us to comprehensively understand the problems facing the communities and see that small measures are having an immense impact.

I feel fortunate to have been able to experience one small part of India, and see dedicated individuals working hard using knowledge, compassion and faith to significantly improve communities.

Above: Clare (far right) with students in Darjeeling.

Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA) promotes and supports the works for education, justice and development undertaken by Loreto Sisters and their colleagues in Australia and around the world.

Clare Condon travelled to India as a MWIA volunteer.

For further information about the work of the Loreto Sisters and volunteering opportunities with MWIA please visit www.loreto.org.au

Be sensitive and recognise your own prejudices

Sr Elizabeth (Lizzie) Donnan, an Australian born Loreto Sister, currently works in Zambia, focusing on assisting schools and communities to be sustainable and self sufficient. In a country where resources are scarce and communities must pull together to survive, Lizzie is constantly challenged and humbled by her experiences.

Lizzie has been used to living and working in many different places all her life. She was born in Brisbane and completed her primary schooling at a Loreto school in Perth. In 1959 her family moved to Melbourne and she undertook her secondary education at Loreto Mandeville Hall. In 1965 she moved to NSW to enter the Novitiate program at Normanhurst.

After completing her novitiate program, Lizzie undertook a science degree at Melbourne University. This set her on her way to a diverse 27 year education career at Loreto schools all around Australia.

Her first taste of Africa came in the midst of her teaching career, when in 1988 she undertook a tertainship in Kenya. She spent six months in Kenya, in what she says was a “very challenging but mind broadening” time. Her interest in cross cultural issues enabled her to embed herself in the life and culture of the Kenyans and she felt a connection to the people there and the way of life.

When she returned to Australia she took on the role of Superior at Ballarat and was responsible for sisters in temporary vows. She continued her teaching career and also pursued her interests in cultural issues. In 1997 she compiled a book on cross cultural missioning and exchange within the worldwide IBVM Loreto Sisters institute. She was a key driver behind cross cultural issue awareness and minis-

tries and questioned how well the Institute operated within a cross cultural framework. She found this to be a great personal challenge and believes that this led her to where she finds herself today.

She says that one of her key learnings throughout her experiences has been “to be sensitive and recognise your own prejudices. Because of the culture we grow up in we subconsciously regard ourselves as superior in some way but we are not always aware of this”.

Following the life changing experience in Kenya she volunteered to go to South Africa in 1997. Within a few months found herself living in a township near Witbank (100km from Pretoria) learning Zulu (one of the official languages).

She taught in a government secondary school for seven and a half years. They had no science lab but after six years she was able to set one up, “cautiously and carefully” she emphasises. In such a fragile structure and sensitive township still scarred by years of apartheid, she felt she had to proceed in a gradual sense and bring a sense of empowerment to the community.

Lizzie completed her work at the school in 2004 and then spent the next few months traveling between Zambia and South Africa. As part of the **Courage to Move** mission in South Africa, Lizzie volunteered along with fellow Loreto Sister, Sr Pat Hanvey to undertake a new post in Zambia. She soon found herself in Lukulu in the western province of Zambia: a very poor and remote township,



but a town where she could see endless opportunities to assist. She speaks highly of Sr Pat, “a lateral thinker, with such an open heart and capacity to care”.

Lizzie began teaching at two high schools in Lukulu – one with two unequipped science labs and the other with two news labs being built – both however with no plans for funding to equip them and actually make them usable.

Now with the help of donations through **Mary Ward International Australia (MWIA)** and the generous support of **Kirribilli Parents and Friends Wishing Well Project, Aloysius Social Circle** and other individuals she has purchased non-consumable science equipment for the two labs.

Of her life in Zambia, she reflects that they are all working together to survive. Progress is slow but steady and trust is important.

Thanks to the generous support of Loreto networks and friends, Lizzie can continue her work and make a difference to the lives of countless vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals.

By Sophia Ljaskevic

For further information about how you can also help please visit www.loreto.org.au and click on MWIA.

Loretos Downunder, a Stirring Institutional History



Loreto in Australia Mary Ryllis Clark UNSW Press

(Abridged review by Rosemary Keegan Blake)

'He congratulated Dr. O'Connor on getting us for his Diocese, said he was not so fortunate, though he asked years ago.'

In 1875 Mother Gonzaga Barry recorded in her diary the rueful words of Melbourne's Archbishop as he welcomed her and her sisters from the Loreto Institute in Ireland. The sisters had come to Australia at the invitation of the Bishop of Ballarat. Nothing had come of Archbishop Goold's own approaches to the Mother General.

'I suppose she did not think Australia was within the pale of the civilized world'

The Bishop of Ballarat, it seems, had better connections.

Contrary to what the sisters had expected, they found Melbourne and Ballarat to be prosperous and sophisticated cities.

The story of the Order in Australia is told by Mary Clark in a wonderfully engaging and sympathetic narrative enhanced by archival

photographs and personal reminiscences of members and friends.

The cover photograph shows two sisters, in traditional habit, walking under umbrellas in the rain, wind whipping their cloaks and long skirts. There is a liveliness in their steps and their faces have an expression of such good cheer one might be excused for imagining them being borne aloft by their magical umbrellas.

There is a touch of magic in their story. From the very beginning, in Australia, the schools and convents they established flourished. There was much hard work, but their endeavours seem blessed; their faith directing them just as strongly as their astute financial decisions.

There is a delightful story - and I'm sure it must be already famous at Mary's Mount - about a lady who appeared at the Ballarat convent one day, asking if she might be permitted to stay a while. It wasn't long before they discovered that the European stranger was a countess. She came to love the sisters and at her death they received a large bequest. The bequest came at the very time when funds were most needed to complete an ambitious building project. In Ballarat and in most of the major cities, their schools, established as much for the poor as for the privileged, became synonymous with excellence; the sisters themselves renowned for their personal accomplishments. They drew many of their own talented pupils to their congregations.

Mary Ryllis Clark's account is, for the most part, a chronological history. It is mostly a history of success, but there are some darker elements in the story which she does not ignore. Mary Ward, seventeenth century English founder, inspired other women to a religious

way of life based on the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Ahead of her time, misunderstood and censured by the Vatican, she saw her congregations condemned, her houses shut down and herself cruelly excommunicated. She called her exile 'the long loneliness' but she never lost her certainty of the call she had first received.

Mary Ward was finally reinstated in 1909, much to the joy of those sisters devoted to her memory. Initially, I knew little of Mary Ward but reading this story I have been strangely drawn to her. It is as if her spirit walks through these pages.

One cannot read this book without feeling affection. An unruly undergraduate in my year at St. Mary's Hall in 1964, I recall with gratitude that it was Mother Francis Frewin who introduced me to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and read aloud to me one evening, as though it was part of her, the beautiful Middle English poem, *The Pearl*, which I had been studying.

The Second Vatican Council brought major changes. In 1968, (the year in which the cover photo of the sisters in the rain was taken) a general council of the Institute was held to reassess its mission in the light of the new horizons. Mary Ward's original vision had come full circle. Her words are clear. The vision never wavered.

'I saw him immediately and very clearly go into my heart, and little and little hide himself in it, and there I perceive him still to be...'

Rosemary Keegan Blake completed postgraduate studies at Regis College at the University of Toronto.

This abridged Review is from *Tinteán Magazine*, a publication of the Australian Irish Heritage Network, December 2009.

Read the review in full here: http://www.loreto.org.au/news/article_display.cfm?article_id=346

Mary Ward Grants 2010

The 'Mary Ward Grant' was established to support specialist or post-graduate study of theology, spirituality and pastoral ministry, in order to promote the dignity and role of women in the church and society.

We are pleased to announce the following 2010 Grant recipients:

Anneliese Alexander is married with a young child. She works part-time in parish youth ministry. In 2010 she will complete her Master of Arts in Theology and Youth Ministry.

Esther Cole works in graphics and photography and is active in her parish community. She is studying towards a Graduate Diploma in Ministry. This will

enhance her ability to exercise pastoral care and ministry outreach in informal work settings and in her congregation.

Andrea Grant is a previous recipient of a Mary Ward Grant. Her present grant will enable her to pursue Masters of Theology while caring for her three young children and teaching religious education part time at Loreto Toorak, 'gifting the students with a love for Christ, the person, the narrative and the ethic'.

Ria Greene has an employment history as religious education teacher and co-ordinator at school level and as a school advisor and team leader in the Catholic Education Office. She is very involved in her parish, especially in liturgy,

children's liturgy and youth activities. The Mary Ward Grant will contribute towards her attending the Boston College Summer School.

Dominica Jenkins is familiar with the Mary Ward story, having attended school at Loreto Kirribilli. She is currently pursuing Bachelor studies in Arts teaching. The Mary Ward Grant will contribute to the theology units that will enable her to teach religious education, having experienced for herself 'the importance and advantages of a religious education'. She is active in parish youth liturgy.

Marlene Marburg is undertaking doctoral studies with the Melbourne College of Divinity. Her area of research explores how the presentation of poetry can support the exercitant of the Spiritual

Exercises of Saint Ignatius. Marlene is an experienced Director of the Spiritual Exercises.

Simone Smith has completed a Bachelor of Theology and is undertaking a specialised Graduate Diploma of Theological Studies to further her personal search for truth and meaning and her desire to serve God and others. She is very involved in parish and tertiary youth ministry and was a World Youth Day Leader. She is committed to ministry with youth and young adults.

Applications for the 2011 Grants close on Wednesday 13 October 2010.

For further information:

http://www.loreto.org.au/works/postgrad_grants.html

Australia Day Community Group Award

Ellen Moran ibvm and Anna Warlow sgs were recently awarded the 2010 Australia Day Community Group Award for their outstanding work in "The House of Welcome Project" at Three Springs, WA.

Three Springs is a remote rural town 5 hours north-east of Perth, suffering from drought and a downturn in agriculture. The *House of Welcome* has provided a sense of hope and a warm heartbeat open to everybody and all cultural groups.

Ellen (pictured right) and Anna's work together is a wonderful collaboration between the Loreto Sisters and the Good Samaritans. They have worked very hard, are much appreciated and they acknowledge the support they have received from their networks, friends and colleagues. Some of their activities include:

- A community garden project for Indigenous women
- Established a choir called "Crowing in the mid west"
- Held 400 year anniversary celebrations of Mary Ward
- Community springs fair that raised \$5000 (with clothes provided by St Vinnies)
- Centacare holiday programs
- Indigenous community activities and attendance at significant Indigenous gatherings
- Support opportunities through mid west mental health network
- Visits of health care workers to support people in need

"We are told not to judge and to open our hearts" Anna Warlow sgs



Mary First Disciple National e-Conference 18 May 2010

We invite you to participate in the Mary First Disciple National e-Conference to be held at over 70 sites across Australia including the Loreto Centre on Tuesday 18 May 10.30am to 3.15pm (EST).

This national e-Conference is a commitment of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) Commission for Faith Formation and the Broken Bay Institute (BBI).

Fr Frank Moloney SDB is the key presenter and will be offering insights while exploring Mary as disciple, woman and mother.

The program consist of six sessions with opportunities for participation and local facilitated discussion.

The organiser, Virginia Ryan, is a past pupil of Loreto Kirribilli 1965-1973 and her two daughters were also

educated at Loreto Kirribilli. She is currently the Adult Faith and Pastoral Formation Co-ordinator at the Broken Bay Institute.

We encourage you to consider hosting a site at your school or workplace and invite your friends, staff, students, parents and networks to participate.

The BBI will provide all the necessary practical assistance and ongoing support. All you need to host the conference is a venue with broadband internet connection, a data projector, screen and speakers. To find out more or to register a site visit www.bbi.catholic.edu.au

To attend the e-Conference at the Loreto Centre please rsvp to Marie Blakebrough on 03 9813 4023 by 11 May or by email:

admin@loreto.org.au



Dancing on a Shifting Carpet—Book Review

Dancing on a Shifting Carpet by Leoni Degenhardt and Patrick Duigan and published by ACER Press, was recently launched in Melbourne and Sydney.

Brian Caldwell who attended the Sydney launch provided this outstanding review in the April 2010 edition of **Teacher**.

‘Dancing on a Shifting Carpet is one of the most elegantly written and insightful studies of change that has been published in recent times. The main part of the book is a case study of transformation at Loreto Normanhurst in Sydney.

The authors are well known and respected with very high levels of credibility in the academic world and among practitioners.

Leoni Degenhardt has been an outstanding school leader. The case study component of the book is based on her doctoral research while principal at Loreto Normanhurst.

Patrick Duignan has a national and international reputation as a scholar who has made a superb contribution to understandings of leadership.’

Read more:
http://www.loreto.org.au/members/documents/document_display.cfm?document_id=297

Pictured below at the Sydney launch from left to right: Josephine Lonergan, previous Chair Normanhurst School Council, David and Leoni Degenhardt, Noni Mitchell ibvm.

