



COMMUNITY OF THE HOLY NAME



**Spring 2021
Newsletter**

IN THIS ISSUE...
we learn about the early leaders of our Community. There are also a number of birds to be spotted!

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Holy Name Day: more of the same!

Last year I wrote an article for the Newsletter titled "A COVID HOLY NAME", little imagining that we would be in exactly the same situation twelve months later. But here we are! Once again the celebration of our Holy Name Festival on August 7th was a quiet occasion, involving only the Sisters living in Esther House, but again we enjoyed a day that was happy and special, even if not quite what we would have planned in different circumstances. However, while we were unable to have any human guests, we did enjoy the company of a couple of ducks that flew in to investigate our water feature!

We were fortunate in being able to receive Holy Communion from the Blessed Sacrament reserved in our chapel, and the addition of appropriate hymns and a sermon sent by our Warden, Fr Graham Reynolds made it a very meaningful service.

Sister Sheila Anne produced beautiful floral arrangements for the house and chapel, and made the refectory tables especially attractive with small vases of gold and white blooms. Our festive meal was once again provided from the take-away menu of "The Coconut House" in Warragul Road, and (here's a piece of unsolicited advertising) we all voted it delicious.

In the evening we dusted down our Plain Song and managed a quite passable sung Vespers. As usual our Festival was followed by a three-day Community retreat, and although we were not able to have a retreat conductor with us, Fr Graham Reynolds sent us addresses for each day on the calls, respectively, of Samuel, Jeremiah and John the Baptist. This was a great help and much appreciated. We give thanks that in



"The only visitors we were allowed for Holy Name Day!", said Sr. Valmai. (Photo: Sr. Avrill)



'Sister Sheila Anne produced beautiful floral arrangements...'

spite of COVID we were able to enjoy this privileged time and give glory to the Holy Name of Jesus.

Avrill CHN



Dear friends,

I am not sure where we will be with restrictions when you read this letter but when I wrote it we again had restrictions, so our Prayer Day for August was cancelled as were some of the groups and guests

who had been planning to come to the Spirituality Centre. The most difficult thing this time is not being able to have visitors into your own home; but what a little thing that is compared to what else is going on in other parts of our country and overseas.

It is encouraging to know that so many people now have received their second vaccination for COVID. This is something that will be with us for all time as is the flu but will be eventually controllable by the vaccination.

However, on a brighter note, we have the beginning of Spring with the blossom trees beginning to bloom along with daffodils and many other flowers. It is time to begin

preparing the vegetable gardens so among the gloom new life is emerging.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end".

On August 7th we celebrated Holy Name. It was again a quiet celebration.

During our 3-day Holy Name retreat, we reflected upon addresses prepared for us by Fr. Graham. They were on 'Calling' and he used the calls of Samuel, Jeremiah and John the Baptist. He suggested sisters reflect on their own calling by God to the Community. The addresses gave us much food for thought. Although we are called to CHN, each of you also have your own calling by God and perhaps you could also spend time reflecting on that call.

I often repeat these words to myself;

'I have called you by name; you are mine.'

from Isaiah. They are words of comfort to us all.

May you stay safe in these uncertain times.

Carol CHN

Oh, for the wings of a dove!

In a time of trouble, King David penned these words,

*I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
I would flee far away
and stay in the desert
I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm."
(Psalm 55:6-8)*

I don't know about you but I certainly resonate with David's words during these COVID times.

Sr. Andrea snapped this happy couple, splashing merrily in their bathwater, while she sat at her desk. What a view!

Ed.



What's happening at the Spirituality Centre by Anne Brown

The last eighteen or so months have been challenging for us all as we deal with changing conditions, lockdowns and follow up restrictions in our battle with COVID. It has been frustrating and we are grateful for the grace with which the individuals and groups who use the Spirituality Centre have accepted the necessary cancellations and postponements. Candy, our amazing cleaner and cook, has cleaned the building from top to bottom and is now home schooling her teenage children. Kezha is still making sure the gardens are neat and welcoming, supervised by little Avi as she is unable to attend school.

Our trees have done well to survive the big winds we have had recently, although Kezha dealt with quite a number of branches dropping. In the photo, Sr Avrill is seen jumping over one particularly large branch which was blocking the path near the Gathering Space, before Kezha cleared it away.

Every year the Community is home to a flock of ducks who nest in our trees and raise little ducklings. This year we had several ducks venturing down our chimneys. Sr Avrill and I managed to rescue a few from the fireplace by shepherding them out the big old door with a mop.

To prevent any more deciding to try nesting there, we had the chimneys capped off, so definitely no fires in the fireplaces from now on. The ducks were



very interested in the process and not at all frightened of the workmen. As soon as they were finished, the ducks tried out their new perches and seemed very happy with the work. We look forward to a few ducklings appearing in spring who will explore the grounds, perhaps also the roof, and no more ducks in the fireplaces!

We hope you all stay sane and safe during lockdown number 6 and we look forward to being able to re-open soon.





OBLATES' NEWS by Sister Valmai



Dear Oblates,

Writing from lockdown no. 6, it is a challenge to find any Oblate news! The Combined meeting with the Associates did actually happen and it was very much enjoyed. Oblate Dennis is writing an account of it for this

edition of the Newsletter. Bishop Brad Billings' talk of his visits to the Holy Land brought back memories to those who have been there and was very informative for those of us who haven't.

The next Oblate event was to have been the Annual Retreat on the 24th to 26th of September. For

the second year now it has not been possible to hold it at the Spirituality Centre because of the State lockdown. The Reverend Wendy Crouch had agreed to lead the Retreat and has now offered to give her addresses on Zoom. Quite a number of Oblates are comfortable with this technology and so still look forward to the Retreat which this year will be on 'Exploring Psalm Therapy'.

We celebrated Holy Name Day on the 7th August and for the second year, we were not able to invite Oblates to join with us. We received greetings from a number of them, and we know they would be sharing the day with us in thought and prayer.

Hopefully next year will be more normal.

Valmai CHN



ASSOCIATES' NEWS by Sister Avrill



Dear Associates,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well in this time of COVID and lockdowns. Only one thing is certain at present, and that is that nothing is certain. May this uncertainty regarding things temporal lead us to the

one constant in our lives and increase our faith and trust in God.

We have been fortunate this year in that our Associates' program for the first half of the year was not disrupted at all, and all our meetings were able to take place, even though the date had to be changed for our combined meeting with the Oblates. A write-up of Bishop Brad Billings' presentation to that meeting appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

However, our good fortune in regard to our

program has ended now, as our planned retreat from 10th-12th September falls within the period of extended lockdown. This is disappointing for those who had booked in, but we have no control over these matters, and it is all for our good.

After that there is just our Associates' Corporate Communion on Saturday, 13th November. The celebrant, preacher and afternoon speaker will be the Revd Ken Parker, who is well-known to most of us, and hopefully by then, with so many more people vaccinated, there will be a good chance of it taking place. Almost all our Sisters have had both vaccinations now, and those who haven't will have done so by the time you receive this letter.

May our loving God, on whom alone we can rely, bless and keep you all.

With love and prayers for each one of you,

Avrill CHN

Oblates' & Associates' Day by Oblate Dennis Mills



We were very fortunate to be able to gather in person, oblates and associates, on 26 June. The meeting had been moved back from 5 June due to COVID restrictions, and of course since then things have got worse again.

We celebrated Mass in the Chapel in the Spirituality

Centre at 12:40pm, followed by a delicious lunch with the Sisters, and a chance to catch up, in the dining room.

Our guest speaker for the day was the Right Reverend Dr Bradly S. Billings. Bp. Brad is currently the Director of Theological Education for the Melbourne Diocese, and he has a long association with St George's College in Jerusalem. He has led many tours and pilgrimages in the Holy Land, and these were the topic of his fascinating presentation after our lunch.

Several of our oblates and associates present had accompanied Bp. Brad on one or more of his pilgrimages in the past. Sister Avrill did in January 2018. The key places that Bp. Brad leads the groups, to provide the basic "Gospel Shape" of the pilgrimage are:

Bethlehem - the birth story (Matthew & Luke chs 1 & 2)

Nazareth - the childhood home of Jesus (Luke chs 1 & 2)

The Jordan River - baptism of Jesus in (Mark 1:1-

11)

The Judean Wilderness - the temptation in (Mark 1:12)

Around Galilee - Jesus public ministry (Mark 1:14-8:26)

Caesarea Philippi - Peter's confession (Mark 8:27 – 9:1)

A high mountain - the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-9)

Jerusalem - the last week in (Mark 11:1 – 16:8)

The sense of place, of being able to walk where Jesus walked, is very powerful. Many places have changed a great deal, many are now over-developed and commercialised. The pilgrim cannot help being a tourist too, and sometimes being treated like one. One of Bp. Brad's favourite places to spend time was the Judean wilderness, where you can still get a deep sense of what it was like in Jesus' time.

The Holy Land is a troubled area, and there are many restrictions and regulations to follow, with signs of authority everywhere. Bp. Brad said he had never felt unsafe, but he was always conscious that anything could happen at any time.

At the conclusion of the 2018 pilgrimage, everyone was given a specially made cross as a memento, in the form of a representation of the loaves and the fishes.

In 2018 Bp. Brad published a book on his experiences: "To Be a Pilgrim – a reflective guide to the Holy Land". A copy of this book is held in the CHN library.



'One of Brad's favourite places to spend time was the Judean wilderness, where you could still get a deep sense of what it was like in Jesus' time.'

Photograph by Gordon Pico,
Pixabay

From the Archives: our early leaders



SISTER ALICE

Born: 1867

Died: 17 January 1955.

Ordained Deaconess (as were our other very early Sisters), On July 19, 1900. Professed privately.

Sister Alice was in charge of the Children's Home, Brighton where "she was a true mother to each of the children." During her time there the adjoining property was bought and became the first Babies' Home. (1916)

Sister's health suffered from the strains of overwork at Brighton and she then spent a time at St. George's Hospital after which she was sent to the Newcastle Diocese where she managed St. Alban's Boys' Home at Morpeth and later St. Christopher's, Lochinvar (for little children). She was recalled to Melbourne in 1931 when Sr. Esther, our Mother Foundress, was dying. Was elected Mother after Sr. Esther's death, saying it would only be for three years. She was one of the first to live in the Community House when it was built in 1936. Soon after this she fell heavily at the Community House, fracturing her hip, which invalidated her for the rest of her life. Sr. Alice spent much time in St. Ives & St. George's Hospitals before being nursed and cared for at the Community House by Sister Gertrude.



SISTER IDA (Ida Ann Voumard)

Born: 14 November 1886, South Australia

Professed: 6 September 1911

Died: 3 October 1972

Sister Ida was the eldest of five children born to Louis and Rose Voumard. Her father was French-Swiss and Huguenot by religion and her mother a Roman Catholic. As a compromise, the children were brought up in the Anglican Church.

When Ida was quite young, they went to live in Yea and then Shepparton where she was educated. From an early age she was conscious of a call to the Religious Life. She came to test her vocation in 1909 in the face of great opposition from her father. After her Profession she and Sister Elspeth taught at St. John's School, Latrobe Street, for some time.

In 1916 Sister Esther appointed her to be in charge of the Children's Home, Brighton where she remained for 18 years. During that period, she was responsible for the inauguration of the first Auxiliaries and made many contacts throughout Victoria which were to prove of great value in the years to come. The first Community retreats were held there and it was through her untiring efforts that the Chapel of the Holy Innocents was built and consecrated.

Her qualities of leadership and organisation and

her faithfulness to her call became more and more evident. So, in 1934, after Sr. Alice's short term of office following the death of Sister Esther in 1931, Sr. Ida was elected as Mother Superior, to which office she continued to be re-elected over a period of 23+ years until in 1958 she asked to be released from her office. She was then 71 years of age.

Largely as the result of Sister Ida's efforts the Community House was built in 1936. In 1939 she visited England and spent almost a year living in many of the Anglican Communities gaining insights which she shared with her Sisters on her return. When the House of Mercy closed in 1946 Sister Ida was a powerful force in the reopening of the house as a Retreat House. She visited England again in 1948.

During her regime the Community grew in

every way - in numbers, in the scope of its undertakings and in spiritual depth. She had a strong and vital personality with practical discernment and wisdom. She was able to inspire great devotion and respect (and sometimes strong opposition) in those with whom she was associated.

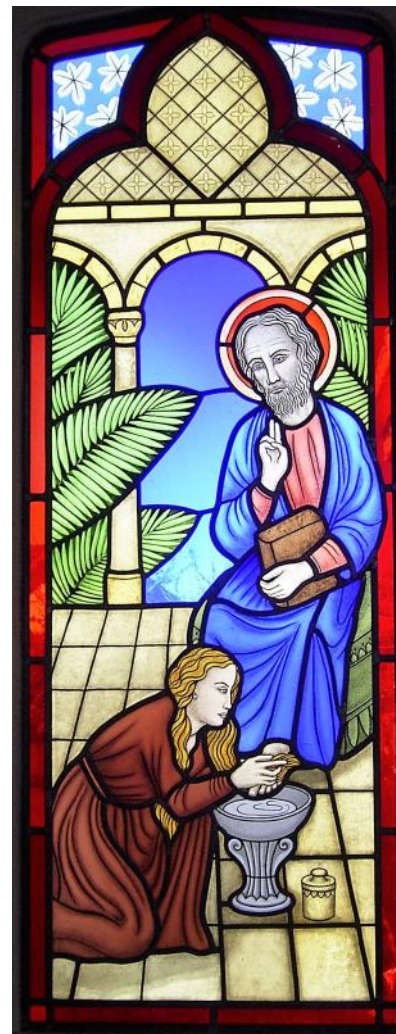
After 1958 her health deteriorated and for the last six years of her life, she was almost completely an invalid. Though her faculties gradually failed, her steadfast faith, the disciplined life and her innate graciousness shone through her weakness.

'Service', a poem by Sister Avrill

Jesus, when you washed my feet
I trembled with awe,
too overcome to speak,
but I didn't try to stop you.
I remembered your words to Peter,
and I knew you *wanted* to do it.
So I leaned back and savoured the moment,
feeling nurtured through and through,
and cleansed and made whole
by your loving touch.

But all the same - God washing my feet!
I was so conscious of who it was
that was kneeling before me,
my heart nearly burst with reverence and love.
And when you had finished I whispered,
"Lord, may I wash *your* feet now?"
To which you replied, smiling,
"Indeed you may, and I hope you will -
very often -
for whenever you wash another's feet
for love of me
you are washing mine."

(Response to a prayer exercise given by Gerard Hughes in "God of Compassion": Imagine Jesus washing your feet, then speak with him.)



Stained glass window in the church of St John the Baptist, Northcote, Auckland, New Zealand.

New in the Library by our Librarian, Philip Harvey

'Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis' by Sarah Bachelard. Revised by Liam Kelly. Convivium Press, 2012. ISBN 978-1-934996-32-4

In this short book, Australian spiritual writer Sarah Bachelard introduces us to contemplative practice. She is quick to warn against the simple desire to have a religious experience, behaviour she recognizes over time even in her own life. By asking how we might know if we are experiencing God, she gradually takes us through true and false ideas about God, transitory and lasting forms of experience, before inviting us to consider contemplation itself, i.e. the possibility of our own contemplative life in the world.

She writes: "Contemplation is a practice of becoming still enough, silent enough, open enough to 'hear' the voice of the other Other. It is a practice of readiness and expectancy. 'Here am I' is the expression of the contemplative stance – open, receptive and listening. 'Here am I' is a surrendering of one's own agenda and one's prior conceptions about what is needful, even about what is good ... we learn radical non-possessiveness in relation to ourselves, our notions of God, our desires. In the space that opens up, we find ourselves beginning to tune in, at first barely recognising the sound, to the Word that resonates in the silence." (p. 36)

Bachelard's concern though is with crisis, whether collective or personal crisis, and how we are sustained in transition "from the suffering of crisis into a deeper wholeness and truthfulness." (p. 59) Written

in 2015, she is talking to a pre-pandemic readership, but her words speak directly and meaningfully to the current international crisis and our own awareness. Bachelard provides an extended meditation on the Passion story as "the wayless way", summarised in the section headings "the surrender of Friday", "the waiting of Saturday" and "the gift of Sunday". The concluding meditation draws on her own personal crises while using a range of contemplative writers who speak to the truth of crisis.

Thomas Merton is quoted in regard to the discovery that acceptance of self and our own limits can awaken a profound love of others – "a profound compassion for all of us." Iris Murdoch speaks of "unselfing", where we overcome the propping up of the ego, and belief in the illusions it creates. Then John Main, clearly an important influence, who writes of the risk of contemplation itself: "it requires nerve to be really quiet." Or Parker Palmer who she says, in response to the crisis of questioning if our work is being effective, "judges his action, not by the result it gets, but by its fidelity to his own calling and identity." Bachelard presents us with different dimensions of contemplative living, grounded in lived experience and its many varying challenges.

