



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 27, May 2023

Dear Associates and Sisters,

Welcome to the May edition of **Many Paths**! How quickly each year flies by—we've celebrated Pentecost recently, and then we're into Ordinary Time. In this edition there are some items about **Pentecost**, including the poem alongside this article. Though the feast is over too soon, we benefit from always being attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. If you are looking for some inspiring listening about Pentecost and its significance, details about a podcast by Elissa Roper, a theologian working for ISMAPNG, will be well worth your attention.

The Mercy Associates group in Young has much to celebrate, with six candidates recently making their initial commitment as Mercy Associates—see the photo-story of their commitment ceremony and celebration on page 2.

And Ballarat also has much to celebrate—their group is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year! A mini-pilgrimage to Warrnambool, the congregation from which the Ballarat East congregation was founded, has been a highlight of their celebrations—see page 5 for their account of this journey.

The network facilitators—Chris in NSW, Anne in VIC and SA, Marg in QLD and myself in WA, are very aware of the uniqueness of each Mercy Associates group. Each is the expression of its members and the gifts they each bring to their group. Our way of being Mercy Associates prizes these differences between groups, and that's why we encourage you to send in articles and photos to Many Paths—so other groups can be inspired by what you and your group are doing!

Best wishes in all your endeavours to be a living expression of Mercy in our world!

Carmel Ross
Executive Officer

Pentecost

You didn't come in a great wind
or in swirling tongues of fire,
but with a touch as gentle
as the wing of a butterfly.
Yet, instantly we knew you,
our recognition much older than words,
and we opened like flowers
to the sweetness of the moment.
Then it was over. The sun continued
its path across iron roofs,
birds flew in and out of the fig tree
and the neighbour's dog, nose down,
vacuumed smells from the footpath.
But no, not over, for this remains,
this light that stitches all things
into a shimmering oneness,
so that we lose ourselves
in sun, houses, tree, birds, dog,
and we know as we stand here
on holy ground, that nothing
will ever be the same again.

Joy Cowley

Psalms from the Road



*I have great confidence in you
to do what you think best.
State your opinion and al-
ways act with courage.*

Young welcomes six new Mercy Associates

The Mercy Associates group in Young celebrated with enthusiasm on 15th May, when six candidates made their initial commitment to become Mercy Associates.

Other Mercy Associates in the group renewed their Commitment.

The six new Mercy Associates are:

Patricia Saines, Carmel Hardcastle, Mary Baumann-Carson, Lyn Quay, Val Patterson, and Marguerite McGlynn.

Sr. Patricia Johnson (new Community Leader Central A) was present, as was Sr Rita Savage and Sr. Lorraine Cupitt.

Photo at right: The moment of commitment



Below, top row: Mary Baumann-Carson receives her Mercy Associate badge from Ann Murphy; Val Patterson signs her Commitment Certificate; Lyn Quay receives her Mercy Associate Certificate from Sr Tricia

Bottom row: The cutting of the cake; The celebration cake!!!; The thriving Young Mercy Associates group



**Congratulations
& Welcome!**

PENTECOST ENRICHMENT FROM ELISSA ROPER

Australian Women Preach is an organisation that encourages women to share their faith by preaching. One of their Pentecost podcasts was by **Elissa Roper, a respected theologian who works for ISMAPNG**. This will be well worth listening to, it has received positive feedback. The information below is from their Facebook page:

We're delighted to have Elissa Roper preach on the podcast for this Sunday's celebration of

Pentecost! 🔥

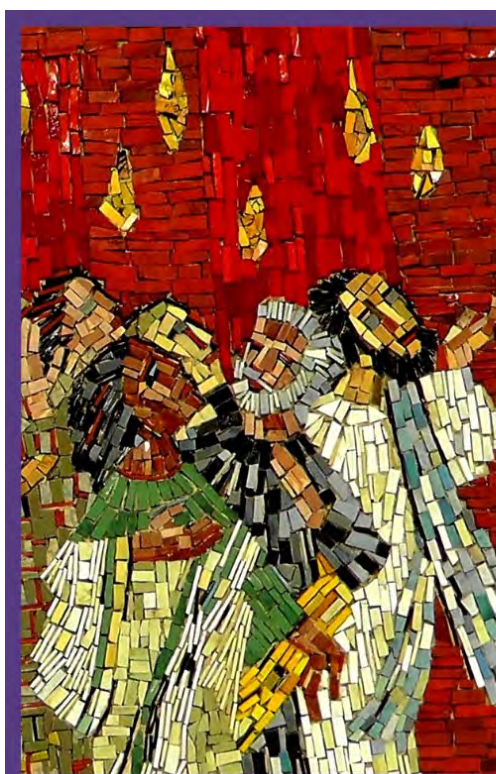
Listen here: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/awp>

Find out more: <https://australianwomenpreach.com.au/>

Elissa is a theologian specialising in synodality in the Catholic Church. She is interested in building a mature, responsible and loving Church. Her writing has a focus on developing foundations for Catholic ecclesiology in a new era of synodality. She explores how such foundations may support the praxis and good governance of synodality.

Elissa manages a Program of Theology for women in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; a partnership in tertiary theological education between the Sisters of Mercy and the Divine Word University. She is an approved lecturer in systematic theology in this Program.

Elissa had a role assisting the Drafting Committee of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia in 2022. She is a member of the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA) and the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) Theological Association.



"Those **flames of life**, in, through and over the people of Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost after the first Easter, **burn today**.

In us...

Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit has been sent, our advocate is with us, and we are guided by the Spirit of **truth** and we dwell in the spirit of **love**.

Elissa Roper



Mercy Associate Honorary is an option available to Mercy Associates who, because of age, frailty, illness, etc., are no longer able to attend meetings of their local group. It enables them to remain Mercy Associates, with their ministry being prayer for others. A formal acknowledgement is provided through the issuing of an 'Honorary' Certificate. Contact your Network Facilitator (Chris in NSW; Anne in VIC & SA; Marg in QLD; Carmel in WA) if there are Associates in your group for whom this option should be considered.

When's your birthday?

Join other Mercy Associates in acknowledging birthdays and praying each month for those whose birthdays fall in that month. Les Stewart from Ballarat Mercy Associates prepares a list of birthdays that also includes feast days during the month, and a prayer. We only need the day and month (not the year!). This sheet is emailed out early in the month. **Send your birthday info to your Network Facilitator if you'd like to be part of this.**

A time of mourning for Gladstone Associates

Norma Alice Tanna: On 24th February, our Gladstone Mercy Associates were shocked to learn our long-time member and friend had passed away suddenly at her home. Norma's husband Reg, passed away in 2000. She is survived by her three children - Catherine in Melbourne, Michael at the Gold Coast and Tony in Perth along with eight grandchildren.

Norma was the first Lay Coordinator along with Jim Hyslop [Dec.], when the Mercy Sisters left Gladstone in 1998. At this time, a successful 'Casserole Bank' began, with the Associates cooking food made available for such emergencies as parents battling to look after children, bereaved families, the elderly living alone and temporarily unable to cook. [Long ceased due to Gov. regulations.]

Norma was a wonderful pianist and played the organ for our special occasions and Sunday Mass. After Reg's death, she became a music teacher teaching at many of the Gladstone private and public schools. She continued to play for many functions for the City including Eisteddfods, Musicals, etc. She was an asset to our group and Church community and will be greatly missed.



Dorothy Leech

A Pentecost Reflection with a Celtic flavour...

Celtic Christians have a unique image for the Holy Spirit: the wild goose. Yep, the honking, flapping, nipping-at-your heels bird who refuses to be tamed, has framed the theological imaginations of believers for generations in regions surrounding Ireland and Scotland.

The imagery is spot on and brilliant.

Like a wild goose, God nips at us and provokes us to travel to obscure places as a collection of practitioners of the kingdom unconfined by convention. God's Spirit, like these obnoxious long-necked creatures, can even be somewhat aggravating and difficult to ignore when pushing us to defy logic and comfort. The nudging of the Divine Presence is not always graceful or welcome either, disrupting our conscience and disturbing our assumptions about what is good, right, just, and biblical.

The Holy Spirit, like our feathered friends, lives in freedom and refuses to be contained and controlled.

Still more, beauty is in the flight of these strange birds. They refuse to travel alone and instead fill the skies in gaggles shaped like the letter "V." This provides yet another seamless symbol for individuals and gaggles of God's people who trust the whims of the Spirit as they follow Jesus as the head of rather rambunctious flock. May we never try to tame them, only fly alongside them.



~ Taken from **Wild Geese and God's Spirit as Uncaged Bird** by Greg Klimovitz

Come Holy Spirit, lead us on a wild goose chase into the heart of God!

Jamberoo Abbey Facebook page, 25 May 2023

BALLARAT MERCY ASSOCIATES PILGRIMAGE TO WARRNAMBOOL

As part of celebrating our 35 year anniversary, we decided to make a pilgrimage to Warrnambool, to trace the journey five Sisters embarked on 142 years ago to establish the new Ballarat East Congregation.

On Wednesday 10th May 2023 Geraldine Mugavin rsm along with Mercy Associates, Jo Rix, Margaret McDonald, Les Stewart and Frances Segrave 'went on pilgrimage' to the former Convent of

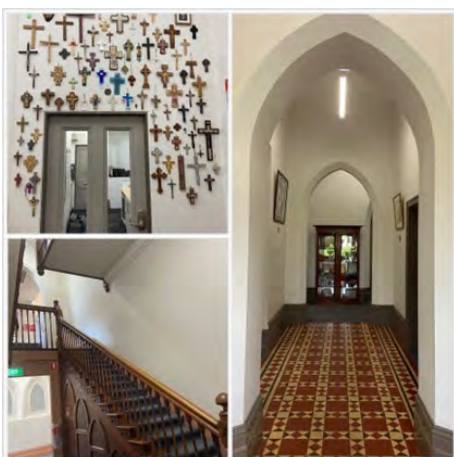


Mercy, Warrnambool which is now part of Emmanuel College, a secondary, co-educational College – formed by the amalgamation of the former Saint Ann's and Christian Brothers' Colleges.

On the way Sister Geraldine lead us in a reflection on the time and place, those many years ago when the Sisters set out from the Convent of Mercy, Warrnambool to Ballarat.

Upon arrival at Emmanuel College we were made to feel welcome. Our visit coincided with the official opening of a refurbished Science precinct for senior students. Sisters of Mercy, Marie Mansbridge and Kathlyn O'Brien led the blessing of the new rooms and the Mercy crosses for each classroom.

Following morning tea, we were taken on a tour of the magnificent Science precinct. We saw how the designers had made optimum use of internal spaces without altering the building's structure.



After the tour we were met by the College Alumni Co-ordinator, Candice Hampstead, who led us through the former Convent and Boarding school. While there have been many changes to the building's interior the original exterior remains. The Chapel's interior is largely unchanged, it is beautifully maintained and is used for prayer and reflection by staff and students. A permanent timeline showing the history of the Sisters

in Warrnambool is displayed in a prominent position on the wall nearby. It is designed to encourage passers by to stop, read and reflect. This we did!

Upon completion of the tour, we realised that the Mercy tradition has been carried through the years and is now incorporated into Emmanuel's ethos.

The pilgrimage was a time for reflection and rejoicing in all things Mercy!

Frances Segrave



From Rockhampton to The Holy Land

We are so blessed here in Rocky to be able to attend the regular Saturday morning Mass before our meetings and to have a special 'Mercy' liturgy, thanks to Claire Stitt, one of our Associates. On this occasion some beautiful prayers were included for the Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates, as well as for all mothers and those who have lost their mother. In our group, we have some lovely singing voices and 'traditionally', our recessional song has become 'Circle of Mercy', which is always a very moving and inspiring way to end Mass. During this Mass, Sister Beryl Amedee rsm led the ceremony for twelve Associates to renew their commitment for another year. The Mass was celebrated by Father Peter Tonti, our Vicar General and assisted by seminarian Peter Doherty from the Holy Spirit Seminary in Brisbane, who is on placement in Rockhampton. They were both warmly welcomed, when they were able to join us for the remainder of the morning.

College (TCC) were planning a High Tea fund raiser in late July for Mercy Works and were seeking our support. This was very exciting news, as we have previously worked together and raised funds for Mercy Works. Also, during the meeting, we were able to provide those present with the new Mercy Associates Prayer Booklet, which we agreed has been beautifully arranged with inspiring prayers and reflections.

Our guest speakers for the morning were two of our Associates, Claire Stitt and Pat McDevitt, who shared with us their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which they had made in December last year. This had been with our Bishop Michael McCarthy and other parishioners. Claire and Pat showed many photos from "The Land of the Gospels—The Holy Land" and for those of us who have not been there, it was wonderful to see pictures of so many familiar names we recognized from the Old and New Testaments. There were too many places for me to 'just list' and clearly many very

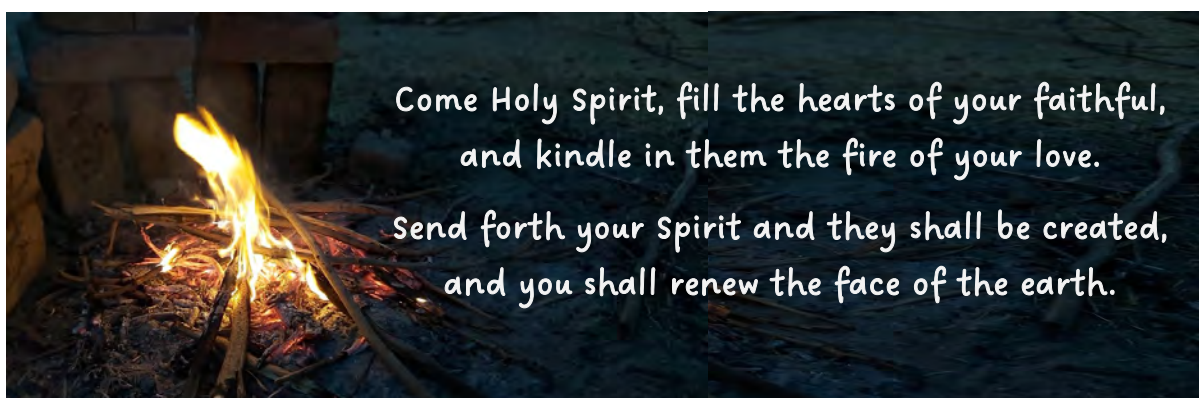


special moments for them both, but celebrating Mass on the Sea of Galilee and in the Tomb in Jerusalem, were amongst their highlights, as well as The Garden of Gethsemane (perhaps the same Olive Trees, as when Jesus was there), the Stations of the Cross and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and the Treasury building in Petra.

As other members of our group had been to the Holy Land, Claire and Pat's presentation generated some interesting discussion.

It was a very enjoyable morning and we finished with a prayer to *Our Father* and look forward to our next get together.

Jennifer Loscher



Refugee role model reopens local school

For six years, Janu Amuan, the principal (head teacher) at West Montford Primary School in the remote Iowara region, struggled to see the village's school shut down.

Janu, who considers himself a pioneer refugee, was desperate to see his old school re-open. As locals became angry, he spent two years working hard to make sure the school – which was started by the Montford Missionaries in 1991 – would open its doors once more.

The West Papuan refugee (he was born in the village of Erecta on the Fly River and was relocated by the PNG government in 1987, receiving permanent residency in 2015) is now proud to say, as of 2023, 141 students have enrolled in the school, with 96 students attending. There are now four teachers on staff, including himself.



"It was very run-down, with empty school buildings - no blackboards, no desks, all past records were gone," the married father of six boys says of the school in the remote village which closed its doors in 2016.

"The livelihood of the people is very poor," he explains of the struggle to keep the school open. "The condition of the road from Iowara is also very poor - it is 45 km and takes one to two days walking on the muddy clay road. Some people walk this road carrying packs on their backs to the market in Kiunga in the extreme heat. If they travel by the Public Motor Vehicle (a 12-seater bus) it takes four hours on the bumpy, boggy road. If it rains heavily the bus has to pull off the road and stop."

Many of the young people from the area who train and qualify as teachers move away from Iowara looking for a better life. Not so for Janu.

After completing Year 12 at Kiunga Secondary School

and then working as a volunteer with Sr Maureen Sexton RSM, a Mercy Sister, at the Kiunga **Mercy Works** office in 2005, Janu decided he wanted to become a teacher. Sr Maureen helped him obtain a government scholarship at Divine Word University, where he graduated with a Diploma of Primary Education.

He taught at two schools on the down Fly River, when our **Mercy Works** Kiunga Project Coordinator, Steven Dude, identified him for the **Mercy Works Senior Teachers Academy** program. Here he learned how to manage subsidised tuition fees, school funds and banking requirements, which he says has enabled him to become more accountable and competent in the head teacher role. Janu has since returned to West Montford Primary School in Iowara.

While rebuilding the school has been incredibly challenging, re-opening will rebuild some sense of community, he says.

"I've gained a lot of self-confidence, and this makes creativity!" he smiles. "Some people were very angry about the last six years... I'm satisfied to see new life return to my old school. It helped me to become the person I am today."

Jo Casamento, **MercyWorks**



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