



# JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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## COMPASSION A WAY OF LIFE

Before Stage 4 restrictions were imposed in Melbourne, I read a book entitled 'On the Brink of Everything'. The title captured my attention, and its author Parker J Palmer nudged at my curiosity. In it Palmer shares some reflections from his life's journey: those good times and the times when he found himself in a dark and challenging place. One of the highlights of this thought-provoking memoir is his encouragement to all of us to take time to ponder, to observe and to appreciate all that we have been given. He encourages time alone to be still and to reflect on life's wonders, whether they be in the natural world or in the people around us or within one's self. A man of compassion.

These months of Covid-19, whilst being immensely challenging, unpredictable and distressing have given all of us time to reflect and to assess what we do and how we do it. We often hear commentary that suggests we are in a "new normal". Those of you in our ministries have had to adjust to this "new normal" on a daily basis as you have gone over and above in your response to those in your care. This applies to all in education, health and aged care and our research institutes.

In our [Vision, Mission and Values document](#) we have these thoughts on our value of Compassion:

*"We are compelled to reach out to those most in need of compassion. We give priority not to ourselves, but to our neighbours in need."*

We Trustees are grateful to each and every one of you, for your herculean efforts during these days. 'Thank you women and men of compassion.' You are truly inspiring!

In July we celebrated the death of Mary Aikenhead in whose name we minister on behalf of the Church. In the early 1800s, she experienced devastating times in Ireland when the Congregation was just beginning. She responded with care, compassion and generosity. She sought to bring hope, justice and love to all around her. In 1841 she wrote:

*"We must pray for blessings on all who assist our efforts."*

This is as true today as it was in 1841. An inspiring woman of compassion.

Another woman of compassion is Mary MacKillop. On August 8, our Church celebrated the life of Mary MacKillop our first Australian saint. Her life story like Mary Aikenhead's was very much one of reaching out to those in need with love and generosity. This continues today. One of my favourite sayings of Mary MacKillop (from 1880) is:

*"Never is God nearer to us than when danger threatens."*

Mary Aikenhead and Mary MacKillop were 'On the Brink of Everything' when they began their congregations. They did not know what lay ahead but they were so filled with compassion, courage and faith that their spirit endures to this day. In their later years each of these wonderful women had serious health issues but they were able to continue to inspire many to join them in their loving service of God's people.

Allow me to finish where I began with Parker Palmer, whose title reminds us that we are on the brink of everything each day - in the smiles we give, in the words of encouragement we speak and the random acts of kindness we offer.

Let us continue to walk with compassion, bringing hope and love to all whom we meet.

Lauren Dixon rsc  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

# STEWARDSHIP VISITS

The Trustees have been able to continue their Stewardship Visit program over the last few months by going virtual! Recent visits have included St Vincent's Care Services Southport, Mitchelton and Auburn, St Vincent's Private Community Hospital Griffith and St Vincent's College Potts Point.

The Trustees met with the incredible leadership teams, staff and some of the residents and students of these ministries. What was evident at all sites is the incredible work our people continue to do during these unprecedented times. The care, compassion and kindness shown to everyone in their care has been, at the very least extraordinary.

The agility required to be able to *respond to the needs of the times* is a key theme when the Trustees meet with the various leadership teams. The Trustees are very thankful and proud of all those who work within the Mary Aikenhead Ministry family.

Ms Christine Raeside  
Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

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## PARKLEA PRISON MINISTRY

*'Today though shalt be with me in Paradise.'*  
**(Luke 23: 38-43)**

Amazing words spoken by Christ to the robber crucified with Him. His forgiveness came about through petitioning Christ.

Earlier this year four children were killed on a footpath in Oatlands, not far from my home. The mother forgave the driver - almost impossible to understand. Each time I drive by, the flowers and crosses are at the place where the children were hit. Their Mum and Dad must so love Christ and believe in Him and the healing power of prayer and forgiveness.



The robber admitted that he was being justly punished. So too the prisoners in gaols have been found to have committed crimes. Crimes that can lead to hurt, pain and death in others. The judicial process will decide on punishment and, often, incarceration. Yet, at times, the opportunity is there for others to show care, love, forgiveness and compassion. As Christ showed to the robber.

St Vincent's Health staff have been on a journey with prisoners and Correctional staff at Parklea Correctional Centre (NSW) since March 31, 2019. In each of the days since, through their actions, they have shown care and love for those incarcerated. Even though, on occasions, they have encountered difficult confrontations and push-back. The staff are there, not to judge, but to be the presence enacting the Mission and Values of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. 'It is by our actions we are known.' This does not come in the short time. Rather in the passing of time, the engagement with others and in the ways in which love, care and compassion is sincerely given.

Assoc. Prof. Peter Howard  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

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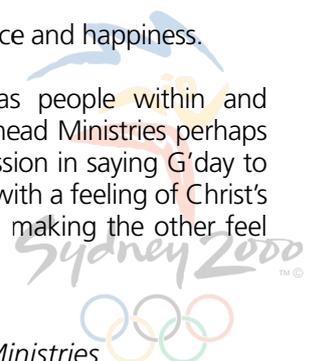
## G'DAY

**20 years ago** Australians were given a Mission to bring friendship, joy and happiness to all those, whether they be from Australia or internationally, attending the 2000 Olympics. We were asked to say G'day, give a welcome and show hospitality and care for fellow Australians and overseas visitors - to do it the Aussie way! It was a Sydney time of love for one another, excitement and memories of success and achievement for both the Olympians and Para-Olympians. The greatest impact, for me, at that time was the sense of joy amongst all present.

People came together in peace and happiness.

Today, in our daily lives, as people within and associated with Mary Aikenhead Ministries perhaps we should follow such a Mission in saying G'day to people more often, to say it with a feeling of Christ's love, a smile and sincerity in making the other feel valued for whom they are.

Assoc. Prof. Peter Howard  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



# MT CARMEL COLLEGE PILGRIMAGE

AUGUST 2020

The day dawned crisp and clear, the forecasted rain nowhere in sight. It was our Pilgrimage day which was led by an inspirational leader Gerard McNulty. Planning had been undertaken to provide 4 very unique pilgrimages for staff at Mount Carmel College. Two traced the Sisters footsteps throughout Hobart and history, one was a personal pilgrimage based on the Examen. The final pilgrimage focussed on a labyrinth and the journey within.

Having come to Mount Carmel in 2018, I had been told the story of our Sisters many times but it was sometimes hard to compare the life in Hobart in the beginning, with the cosmopolitan city we live in now. Today it would be my opportunity to experience it – in the footsteps of those who came before me. What did our Sisters do? Who were their companions on their journey?

The morning began with the pilgrims gathered around the grave of Mother John Cahill, Mother de Sales O'Brien and Mother John Xavier, three courageous and pioneering Sisters of Charity who arrived in convict HOBART in 1847. Whilst this is their final resting place, it was our beginning. We began to walk.



Forty minutes of walking together and apart, we arrived at the Queen's Orphanage Asylum. The building stands impressive against the landscape, however the group is told of its bleak and dismal past. The building was purpose built for the orphaned, destitute and neglected children in Van Diemen's Land and didn't close its doors until 1879. The orphanage was visited frequently by the Sisters in their service to the community. Once closed the children were boarded out or the girls were sent to St Joseph's Orphanage. At this point, our attention was directed to the wharf where women were kept in a ship. One could only imagine how cold it would have been, floating on the water of the Derwent. The women were taken to the "Brick fields" to be sold for service in rural communities and to work, much like slaves.

The group continued on with some heading to the "brick fields" and others heading towards St Mary's Cathedral. The groups found many ways to arrive at



the steps of the Cathedral, supporting the idea that a Pilgrimage is each person's journey. Some experienced the goat track off the side of the hill, whilst others kept to the main road and still others along the paths through Hobart.

At midday, the group gathered outside St Mary's Cathedral. It is here we contemplate our journey from "darkness into light" and the importance of God's love. Christ's love is unconditional and impels us to "do" for others.



The journey continued to the Hobart Gaol. Here we heard that the Sisters would visit the Catholic convicts at the Cascade Female Factory. Again "visiting". It is here we also hear of Sr Cathy Meese's service to prisoners. Another strong reminder of the courageous women who followed the call.

The day ended with a lunch for the weary, a sharing of a meal, laughter and stories. Pilgrims coming together on a wondrous journey. With the rain beginning to fall, the final walk was to St Joseph's Cathedral where the Sisters walked to on their first day in Hobart.



So much of what we did on our Pilgrimage was about a legacy – what is it that the Sisters did that we are now obliged to do as we carry on forward. We are compelled to give to others what the Sisters did – not possessions but the very precious gifts of LOVE and TIME. What is evident in all the stories shared with us is that this greatest gift was love. The ability of the Sisters to walk and rest with their community. To listen and see, to tend and care for. They were the hands and face of Christ to the starved and malnourished, to the lost and homeless. The Sisters walked the dirt streets of Hobart, talking and laughing, sharing and reflecting – praying. On their journey, their companions provided nourishment and love. I too had the sense that on my "journey" my companions walked beside me.

Ms Fiona Nolan  
Principal, Mt Carmel College

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION RESOURCE

Congratulations to **Dr Gavin Brown, St Columba's College** on the release of his online education program - 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'. A brilliant, inquiry-based learning approach to the study of the History of the Australian Catholic Church, available through Garratt Publishing. This resource has been warmly welcomed by Religious Education teachers and their students.

Dr Brown reflects on this project: 'So many things in life happen by chance. A colleague of mine at St Columba's College casually suggested my name to an editor at Garratt publishing. The problem: how can teachers in Catholic schools make Australian Catholic history interesting and engaging for students? The challenge: could I create a resource which did precisely this? Of course, as a historian by training, I think Australian Catholic history is fascinating. If we are serious about engaging

students in how the past and present are vitally connected, how could we not challenge teachers and students to grapple with such interesting issues?

It is my hope that this new educational product will provide Catholic schools across Australia with engaging resources to fire the imagination, nourish the spirit, and open up the vibrant heritage of our Catholic tradition to the next generation.'



Dr Gavin Brown  
St Columba's College

The resource can be accessed via the following link:  
<https://reconnection.garratt.com.au/modules/>

## PRAYER IN THIS CHALLENGING TIME

Lord Jesus Christ, our true physician and healer, be merciful to us and bring us your aid in these troubled times. Heal all our sickness and every affliction of your people.

Drive out our infirmities of soul and body; free us from all disease and especially from this pestilence.

We place in your gentle Heart the elderly, the frail, people with disability, children, young people and families, our indigenous peoples, those who are

poor, lonely and isolated. As you walk with us, free them from fear, and give them patience and hope together with our loving care.

In your mercy deal also with the causes of our pitiful condition, that in curing our lack of faith and spiritual weakness, you may also remedy our bodily ills.

We place our trust in you, the risen Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

### Lonely

Through the crisis



We were here for them

### Still Lonely

After the crisis



We will still be here

**LONELINESS DOES NOT  
END AFTER LOCK-DOWN**

**At least not for everyone.**

Only with your help  
can we still be here for them.

**Support those who continue to  
be lonely and alone**

[opensupport.org.au/donate-today](https://opensupport.org.au/donate-today)



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