

Volume 6

The Associates Newsletter

Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition

December Edition 2009



*“Go, and with what you have
do all the good you can”*

St Emílie de Vialar

**“For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given...”** *(Isaiah 9:6)*



May peace and joy be with you at Christmas and in the New Year

Once more, the special Feast of Christmas is upon us. Christmas is a special time of thanksgiving

This Christmas will mark 177 years since Emilie deVialar left her father's house in Gaillac, France on Christmas night and, together with her companions, founded the first convent that was to be the nucleus of the future Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. As we give thanks to God for the gift of his Son who came to dwell among us, let us also give Him thanks for the gift of Emilie to us, and her continuing presence and influence among us still today.

The year 2010 marks 20 years since the first SJA Associate gathering in Australia took place. The Associate Committee have put forward a proposal, that the Associates undertake support of a specific SJA project in our region to commemorate this milestone. More information will be forthcoming early in the new year regarding their proposal.

To all who have been in touch with us during the past year, and for your generous support of our missions, thank you. We are sincerely grateful and remember you each day in our prayers.

A special thanks to all who have been involved in planning and organising the Associate gatherings in 2009, in particular to the Committee members, Newsletter Editor, coordinators and presenters, and others who have been involved in the behind the scenes tasks that enable these events to take place. I wish one and all the love, joy and peace of Christmas, and many graces and blessings to meet the challenges of the new year, and look forward to meeting you all again at the Associate gatherings during the new year.

Sister Jeanette

From our ALBANY ASSOCIATES

The last few months have been very busy in our Parish, times of wonderful memories, lots of joy tinged with feelings of sadness and loss. The Convent in Albany has now closed and the last three Sisters have left Premier Circle. Sisters Mary and Patrick going to Perth and beyond, whilst Sister Krystyna will remain in Albany for a time longer.

After 131 years of service and dedication, from 26 October to 1 November, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition were farewelled by St Joseph's College, Albany Town Council, SJA Associates and Holy Family Parish.

The College Presentation Night was held in the gymnasium on Wednesday 28 October 2009. Twenty Sisters were present and acknowledged for their work and dedication to education in our area, religious and secular. Staff, students, families and friends attended - and the College gymnasium was full to capacity.

Principal, Mr Brad Hall announced that the new Early Learning Centre, at present under construction, will be named the "Sister Julie Cabagniol Early Learning Centre". Sister Julie came to Australia in 1855 and is buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Albany. Her headstone was subscribed by the people of Albany in recognition of her dedication and work within the community. Sister Marietta announced a scholarship made to the College, details of which are yet to be finalised.

On Thursday 28 October a mayoral reception was held at the Albany Town Council Reception area attended by the Mayor, Councillors and invited guests. The Mayor spoke of the dedicated work of the Congregation in Albany over a period of 131 years, encompassing education, charitable work for the needy, sick and dying, and pastoral visits to outlying areas, as well as the care and attention given to the many students in their schools. Sister Bernadette responded and presented Mayor Evans with a salt crystal lamp symbolising the city's bright future.

On Saturday 31 October, a special SJA Associate meeting was held at *New Camfield*, the Parish Centre. Twenty Sisters and many Associates attended and it was a fairly relaxed meeting. Sisters Jeanette, Gemma and Margaret Anne (who was recovering from a debilitating 'flu) addressed the meeting after a Powerpoint presentation of images from various meetings and of members through the years. A presentation was made of a plaque with a quote from St Emilie to Sister Mary Petit, the sister of one of the first four Sisters, who arrived on 15 February 1855. The calligrapher was Christine Harrison. An Associate badge was included within the frame.

Afternoon tea and catching up with old friends concluded the afternoon.

The big event of the Parish was Sunday 1 November 2009. Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Holohan and a number of visiting priests. Lunch was held in the College gymnasium with various presentations made on behalf of the Parish and the Catholic Education Office of WA. Bishop Holohan announced that one of the new Diocesan Cathedral bells will be named (Baptised) Emilie de Vialar in honour of the Foundress of the Congregation in recognition of CSSJA's devoted and exceptional work in Albany and throughout the Diocese.

Betty Tulloch

Dear All

As we come to the end of another year and in preparation for the Feast of Christmas, let us reflect on what was and look forward to the many blessings that come our way as we wait in anticipation for the Birth of Jesus.

What do you want from Christmas?

Many people do hope for more than presents at Christmas. We want to somehow return to a time in our childhood (or some other good time in the past), when life was simpler and made more sense, before the troubles of adult life arrived. We feel sure that behind all the fun and decorations, there must somehow be a message, something more, some key to life, hope and happiness.

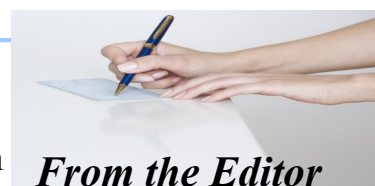
So can we look beyond the way Christmas is celebrated today, and find any real meaning, any message for our lives today?

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to the contents and quality of articles included in our Newsletters and look forward to further contributions from you all.

Special thanks to Lina Strangio for her lovely and informative article representing all Victorian Associates. I look forward hearing from you again. Please extend my very best wishes to Marie Mears and her lovely daughters whom I met in 2001 at the Rome meeting.

In closing, I wish all the Sisters, our Associates and friends a very Happy, Holy and Safe Christmas with good health in 2010. May God bless you all.

Regina Barnett



From the Editor

***From
Victoria***



A group of Sisters and Associates at a recent Ivanhoe gathering

Lina Strangio writes . . .

As a preamble to reflections on the gathering of Associates recently held in Mary Immaculate Hall, Ivanhoe, one word encapsulates the meeting of a diverse group of 13 people who came together that day to warmly welcome our nuns, Sisters Gemma, Jeanette and Bernadette amongst us. The word hung above the altar today, 1st Sunday of Advent, at Mother of God Church (another of the cluster of 3 at Ivanhoe) welcoming this Season of HOPE . . .

It simply read INCLUSIVENESS.

The meeting opened with heartfelt words of welcome from Marie Mears who has convened the assembly of Associates in Victoria since its inception. The beautiful Prayer to St Emilie led us into the report on the meeting in Rome of the International Commission for Lay Associates of which Sr Gemma is a member and had attended personally. Her report is published in the September edition of the Associate Newsletter vol. 5. Sister's clarification of many points on the movement's significance, purpose, development and growth, it's need to encourage a way of fostering greater 'grass-root' onus and relevance in this expansion, and ways of helping each other/or group involvement made us all feel involved and stimulated a broader discussion together with Sister Jeanette and Sister Bernadette and the group.

It also led to much spontaneous happy exchange of reminiscences of times when SJA nuns were teaching in Victoria at the three local parish schools and even further a-field north-west of Melbourne, at Gisborne, near Mt. Macedon; e.g. a happy anecdote from a Mum and ex-teacher at St Bernadette's school, of how the children would get to school early of a morning and line up to welcome the nuns into the school grounds.

Our group includes local parents of past pupils, past pupils themselves and a couple of teachers from that time, ex W.A. past pupils, past pupils born and taught by our Nuns overseas and still have current connections with siblings who have joined the order as in the case of Sr Eugenie (Malta), herself a member of the Commission.

Discussion was lively and from many view points, embraced the true meaning of sharing our Associateship, of being a companion in the spirit of St Emilie and wanting to share our different and universal experiences.

*The second part of the agenda was the need to discuss future meetings of the Associate movement in Victoria. Sadly, natural attrition, demographics, age and infirmity all play a large role in the paucity of our numbers. Also generations now are unaware of the great and vital part the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition played in education and **Caritas** development in Victoria from the 50's till their departure more than 20 years ago, and as a consequence the existence of our Associate movement. We acknowledged in our discussion, that we need to continue to spread the word of St Emilie, tho' we here for the present, won't have the pleasure and inspiration of our nuns' visits to Victoria for the immediate future. A teary few moments!*

We as Associates, however, are urged to look forward by keeping in touch with each other via the 'Newsletter'. To contribute to its pages with articles of interest and anecdotes that we have always enjoyed from all parts of the world where our nuns are living and working at making 'little miracles' happen. So with their example of the joyful Spirit of St Emilie who so well defined the word Inclusiveness, we ended the meeting and just carried on talking!

Our deceased Sisters, Associates, Relatives and Friends

“Eternal Rest Grant to them O Lord”

Sr Kathleen Walsh

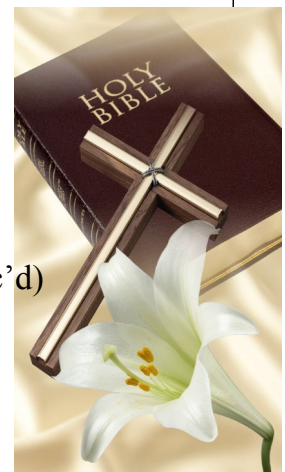
Isabelle Gittos

Denis Ghirlando

Sister of Sr Margaret Mary Walsh (dec'd)

Sister of Sr Julianna Rattigan

Brother of Sr Eugenia (Malta) and
Eliane Attard



***We pray for all our sick Sisters, Associates, relatives and friends,
and for all who have asked our prayers at this time.***

Waiting On God With Emilie



As Advent 2009 approaches we would do well to look at Emilie as our guide. At 19 Emilie was convinced that God had a special work for her to do. What it would be was unclear. She was 35 before it became clear and the time was right.

These long years of waiting on God were a preparation which saw Emilie develop into a courageous, patient and tenacious woman. Suffering was the means which brought about completion of a plan which was not of her initiative, but one entrusted to her for which she must render an account.

What sustained Emilie during this long period of waiting? How did she become so courageous, patient and tenacious? Fortunately we have her own words to tell us. In obedience to her confessor Emilie wrote an account of her graces.

A great love of God

“From this moment and throughout the following twenty three years I continued to love God with a compelling and dominant love.” and “My love for the Lord is tender and compelling.”

Prayer

“I was drawn to prayer; Several times a day I withdrew to my room to pray; always with attention and fervour. This piety which God was pleased to preserve in me, made me avoid obstacles that would hinder me from attending daily Mass”.

The Sacraments

Emilie confessed regularly each week. Like all young women of her time, she received communion two or three times a week always with “*peace*” and “*awareness of grace*”.

Living From Within

“During the months which followed my return to a devout way of life the Lord drew me to recollection and He trained me into interior meditation and made me feel His Presence even in the midst of my occupations as a result of this I entered into very close union with Him so that my soul was intimately united to Him”.

Throughout Emilie’s varied and necessary occupations there was always the invitation “to live from within”, a compelling invitation but difficult to live.

Self Denial

Emilie was stylish. She liked to dress in fashion. She loved clothes and jewellery. In 1853 when she was preparing her two nieces for First Communion she told them, *"I avoided looking at myself in the mirror. I deprived myself of wearing the jewellery that was given to me. I also denied myself of the pleasure of inhaling the perfume of flowers"*.



Mortification

"I suffered very much from the unfortunate influence a person of our household was able to exercise on my father against me. This suffering lasted for 20 years. The Lord sustained me so that I was able to accept with patience and resignation the sufferings which were repeated every moment. The Lord encouraged with these words 'My daughter suffer this for love of Me'".

She continued to endure the sufferings of each moment to relieve the misery of those around her.

Acts of Charity

"I surrendered myself to the inclination with which God inspired me, to practise charity towards my neighbour, whether in visiting the sick in their homes giving them care and relief, or in working for the conversion of sinners and heretics".....

"Through my charitable activities my vocation became more and more convincingly defined".

All the obscurities, dissatisfaction, these hesitations served to deepen her desire. She remained open, she surrendered herself, she listened and she responded. On Christmas night 1832 through Emilie a new foundation was born.

God is always creating. Has he something to bring to birth in me this Christmas?

- A deeper relationship with him?
- A new attitude of hope, joy, compassion?
- Acceptance of a situation I can't change? Poor health, the aging process, a difficult relationship?
- A new way of praying, meditation or contemplation?

We may be surprised this Christmas if we follow Emilie's way.

The St Emilie de Vialar Scholarship

Associates may remember that in 1990 when the Sisters left DeVialar College an appeal was made for donations for a scholarship which would be offered at the new Seton College. Almost \$23,000 was raised and the first Emilie de Vialar Scholarship was awarded at the end of the first year Seton was in operation. There had been no way to inform contributors of the progress of the scholarship but now we can, thanks to this Newsletter.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the St Emilie De Vialar Scholarship, the committee thought it appropriate to report on how the scholarship has progressed over those years. The report is in recognition of the contributions by the Sisters, former students and parents and friends to the scholarship fund.

On the cover of the application is the statement:

The scholarship was established in 1990 with the contributions from former pupils, parents and friends to commemorate and thank the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition and their staff for the contribution they have made to promote the quality of education in the Fremantle district and throughout Western Australia from 1855 to 1989.

Originally the scholarship was offered to a Year 10 girl who was continuing on to Years 11 and 12, and granted up to \$2,000 over two years to go towards fees. Half scholarships could also be awarded.

The scholarship is not exclusively academic. The personal qualities and abilities of the applicants along with the circumstances of the family are taken into consideration. Applicants are asked to write a few words about St Emilie. The selection committee is made up of one of the Sisters, a committee member and the Principal.

From the beginning, the Sisters have been consulted and have had input into all aspects of the scholarship. They have also made a contribution to the fund which was very much appreciated. Along the way there have been some changes.

In 1990 De Vialar College, a girls only college became co-ed Seton Catholic College but the scholarship was open to girls only. In 2000 it was decided that it would be open to all students. This was seen to be in the spirit of St Emilie who did not discriminate in any way. Also the Government began student allowance payments to most Year 12 students. Now one year scholarships are offered to students in Years 11 and 12 with the focus on Year 11.

Up until 2004 the fund was administered by the Scholarship Committee. However, a new authority required by the bank presented difficulties because we were an informal group. Consequently after a meeting with the Sisters, Principal and Finance Manager from the College it was agreed to bring the funds under the umbrella of Seton Catholic College. The funds were transferred to a term deposit to be kept separate within the financial structure of Seton. Monies owed to the College are drawn when the term deposit is renewed.

Since the scholarship's inception, twenty eight students have received the award which is normally presented by one of the Sisters at the first college assembly of the new year. The committee has managed to follow the fortunes of some of the recipients but unfortunately not all. It has been gratifying to see how these young people have progressed.

We should all feel some pride with what the scholarship has accomplished. The winners are encouraged to take up the spirit of St Emilie's entreaty to:

"Go and with what you have and what you will receive, do all the good you can."

The present committee comprises most of the original members some now taking a backward step to make way for some younger members. They are: Marie Finucane (Duggan), Glenys Stevenson (Brindley), Patricia Collins (Thompson), Margaret Kerrigan (Carr), Germaine Matison, Lisa Platt (Satti), Juliana Bodlovich (Cicarelli), Meg Handcock (Rowles) and Wendy Cronin (Sims). Edwidge Biss (Ellul) served on the original committee and has since retired.

Lisa Platt & Trish Collins

News on Seton Catholic College by Sister Elizabeth Rose

In 2010, Seton Catholic College celebrates its twentieth year. On 12 March 2010, there will be reunions of ex-students of the founding Colleges, as well as those of Seton itself. In the evening, an International Food Fair will take place. It is also planned to form an ex-student association which will include all of the above as well.

If you are interested in hearing more about any of these activities, you can write to Sr Elizabeth-Rose at Seton College, or contact her on 9314 1816 (Seton), or 9313 4961 (Convent).

2010 Calendar

Associate Gatherings and Meetings

Mass and Luncheon in June to celebrate the Feast of St Emilie

Reflection afternoon August/September

*Emilie Group will gather for their first meeting for the year on
Wednesday 24th February*

Albany Associates, Parish Lenten and Advent programmes

St Joseph's and St Emilie's Feast Days, and possible Reflection Day

Details as to dates, venues to follow.



***May the Blessings
that come with the Feast of Christmas
be with you
and your families
always.***