



AMSSA

AUSTRALASIAN MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

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Newsletter May 2010 No. 02/10

Welcome to the AMSSA Newsletter.

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A Message from AMSSA President, Jane Holloway

You will all have the flyer for our Perth Conference by now – we are hoping that the conference will provide you with a wonderful opportunity for staff spiritual development in Mercy.

A reminder that the arrangements for students for the 2011 conference are slightly different from 2009: you are invited to send two Year 11 student delegates from your school, and you are asked to cover a registration fee of \$50.00 for each of the two students, and their travel expenses. AMSSA will meet all other costs for the two students.

In this newsletter are two articles: one from Catherine McCauley College Westmead about their Mercy action today. In the second, OLMC Heidelberg have begun their centenary year and at their gatherings have been celebrating 100 years of learning Mercy.

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Catherine McAuley High School Westmead – Immersion Experience in Wilcannia NSW

In late October 2009, Catherine McAuley, Westmead initiated a Programme of Immersion into an Indigenous community. This experience was to be an integral part of our fundraising efforts for term four this year.

The Immersion Experience was to St. Therese's Community School, Wilcannia in far Western New South Wales. St. Therese's is an infants' school catering for children in Year K to 2 from the local community who are mainly aboriginal children. St. Therese's was selected as it came to our attention through the MAGNET group which is coordinated by Sister Margaret Sheppard, RSM for post-school Mercy women.

Throughout this year Catherine McAuley has had a programme of fundraising focusing on various works and ministries of the Sisters of Mercy. This focus includes Caritas in term 1, the mission of the Australian Sisters in Peru in term 2, Mamre House in term 3 and an Indigenous community in term 4. We are very aware that in helping to develop an awareness of Social Justice issues in our young Mercy women we need to facilitate something more than just money raising. Thus the possibility of an Immersion Experience came to birth.

We decided to target Year 9 students. Through a process of selection in which the applicants had to state their reason for wanting to go to Wilcannia as well as how they might be able to bring the experience back in to the school community, we selected seven girls – one from each Homeroom – as well as including the Assistant Social Justice Leader as the eighth participant. Several lunchtimes were devoted to briefing the girls on the geography and landform of the area, various elements of a culture different from our own and the values of respecting differences, listening and treating others with courtesy and compassion. It was also important to introduce the girls to the concepts of culture shock and reverse culture shock.

So it was with great excitement and an air of expectancy that the eight students and two teachers – Mrs Teresa Wilson and Sister Helen Law, RSM from Catherine McAuley embarked on the journey from Parramatta to Wilcannia, a trip of fourteen hours including two modes of transport, rail and coach. Around dusk, several hours west of Cobar and ten hours into the journey, one girl was heard to remark, “By this time we'd have been around Lebanon four times!” However, we did eventually arrive in Wilcannia around 9.pm to be met by Sister Margaret McGrath, RSM who took us to St. Therese's where we found our accommodation for the next two days, had a “comfortable cup of tea” with Sister Margaret and Sister Flo Kinsella, RSM and fell in to bed wondering about what would be awaiting us the next day.

Already every experience had been a ‘new’ one for all of us and the next two days did not disappoint in this regard. From after breakfast until well into the evening we washed red dust off curtains and classroom computers, went in two combie buses to collect the children and bring them to school, attended early morning classes and activities, assisted at the town markets, gave an interview on the local radio and visited the Wilcannia Central School. We were also treated to several town excursions in the bus driven by Emma including a tour of the local Hospital, visited the artist Karin Donaldson and listened to traditional stories told by the Elder Waddy who is also a master craftsman. We purchased a Coolamon carved by Waddy for use during liturgies at Catherine McAuley. Sister Flo also took advantage of our presence & we assisted around the convent with cleaning and putting ‘red’ earth on the patch of grass she was trying to grow at the back door. “Hope springs eternal”! Other highlights of our visit were to listen to Janine, a teacher's aide at St. Therese's whose mother

had been a member of “The Stolen Generation” and to participate in “Night Patrol”, a community service sponsored by the Attorney General’s Department which aims to get people off the streets after 9pm at night and return them safely to their homes.

Most of us spent the day sleeping on our return trip home. We had so many happy memories of our time among the community of Wilcannia and it was very hard to say goodbye. Most of us promised the community we would return some day. We had learnt so much, not just about the people but about ourselves as well.

During our days in Wilcannia the girls had been encouraged to journal and time was set aside each day for quiet reflection and recording of experiences and reactions. After our return to school the girls were to hand in a Reflection Paper. We also had one debriefing gathering at lunchtime on a designated day as well as a short ritual and recounting of experiences with the Leadership Team. However, all was not finished! As it was the turn of Ryan and Clare Houses to fundraise for an Indigenous community during term 4 a “So You Think You Can Dance, McAuley?” competition was organized as a fundraiser for shade cloth for St. Therese’s Community School. After several heats were completed, we had a Mufti Day at school where we were to wear the colours of the Aboriginal Flag and view the finals of the “Dance Off”. It was a great fun and community afternoon for all, including staff who participated with an item of their own. The girls who had gone to Wilcannia – the “Sydney Mob” as they came to be called around the town – made and sold red, yellow and black ribbons as their contribution to the day’s activities. Finally, a substantial cheque was sent to Sister Margaret as this term’s fundraising effort at Catherine McAuley.

The Immersion Experience has been successful in so many ways that we have programmed it into our school calendar for 2010. The association we have formed with St. Therese’s Community school is, we hope, an ongoing connection that brings greater life and awareness for all of us here at Catherine McAuley, Westmead.



The “Sydney Mob”

OLMC Heidelberg celebrates 100 years of learning

Staff, students, alumni and friends of Our Lady of Mercy College (OLMC) Heidelberg have commenced their centenary festivities with high measures of joy, grace, and pride.

On 2 February 1910 the College opened its doors for the first time. Under the direction of the Superior of the Mercy Convent in Fitzroy, five Sisters responded to the request of Father Parker, the parish priest of Heidelberg, to establish a convent school in the area. The Sisters commenced teaching six secondary-aged girls in one room of their rented home in Cape Street. At the same time they assumed responsibility for the education of approximately fifty primary-aged students at St Monica's school in Cape Street (now St John's).



The Principals of Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg

Exactly 100 years later, close to 1130 OLMC students and 130 staff gathered on 2 February to mark the occasion. They did so through some simple, traditional rituals, including singing 'Happy Birthday' after a special centenary cake was cut by Sr Antoinette Burke rsm (one of OLMC's earliest past pupils, a school captain and a former teacher at OLMC) and one of the youngest girls in Year 7.

A more formal Centenary School Assembly took place on 11 February at LaTrobe University. In addition to several presentations about OLMC's history, the occasion featured the presentation of the Excellence Awards for 2009. The College community was joined by Sr Kath Tierney, Ms Patricia Ryan, past principals of OLMC, College Council members and members of the Centenary Committee. The assembly was an enjoyable and meaningful tribute to the College's history and achievements.



OLMC Heidelberg Centenary Dinner at The Centre, Ivanhoe

On the last weekend of March, OLMC celebrated the Centenary with the Past Pupils. On Saturday 400 past pupils attended a Centenary Dinner at The Ivanhoe Centre and on Sunday hundreds of past students, teachers and friends converged on the school after the celebration of the Eucharist at St John's. It was a day of meeting old friends, renewing friendships and sharing memories of school days. It was a very happy occasion. Among the highlights were the warmth and joy so many past pupils displayed when meeting the Sisters again.

Throughout the year the centenary events will pay homage to the founding Sisters of Mercy and those who succeeded them. Fitting tribute will also be extended to the parents and parishioners of the Heidelberg community who over many decades made an immeasurable contribution to OLMC's growth and success. And, importantly, there will be many opportunities for past pupils to connect, re-connect and share recollections of school days.



Resources for Saint Mary MacKillop

Visit www.marymackillop.org.au and watch out for the teacher's guide which is in preparation for using the site.

Visit http://www.marymackillop.org.au/canonisation/list_blogs.cfm?loadref=53#9, which is the official authorized Mary MacKillop website and will give you up-to date information about the canonisation.

Albert Street productions have a DVD about Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph. Details at http://www.marymackillop.org.au/canonisation/list_blogs.cfm?loadref=53#12

Check the 16 March E-News article on the links between Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of Mercy: http://staging.fraynetwork.com.au/mercyworldorg/newscentre/archives/1003/100316_103.html

New Mercyworld website coming soon

Keep your eye out for the new mercyworld.org site, early in June. There will be a teacher's and student's guide for the site.

CATHERINE McAULEY AND THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(from *Tender Courage: a Reflection on the Life and Spirit of Catherine McAuley, First Sister of Mercy*, by Isabelle Keiss rsm and Joanna Regan rsm.)



Catherine McAuley could have been insulated and isolated against the miserable poverty of Dublin. Instead she recognized the call of the Spirit, and accepted it with a grateful love and a willingness to put it at the service of others. As recipient of God's mercy, she saw herself as steward. Gifts given were gifts for others. Direct and practical in her response, she went out into gutter and garret to teach, to soothe and to shelter. She had discovered that her charism, her gift for others, was mercy, a charism to the cutting edge of brokenness or imbalance.