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PARISH MAGAZINE

ST MARGARET MARY'S RANDWICK NORTH
OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART RANDWICK



REFLECTION

DIANE GORDON

What does it mean to 'go in peace'? In Jewish understanding, peace ('shalom') is about relationships restored, communities healed of divisions. So to 'go in peace' is to carry the presence of Christ into the world, bringing God's transforming touch where friendships are broken, injustice is rife, and where prejudice often rules.

The words 'go in peace' are not just nice words to nod our heads to because we agree with them in theory. To literally 'go in peace' is an incredible challenge. As we reflect on what these words mean, we begin to realize just how transforming the Mass is.

We begin to see that, because of our baptism as Christians, we are called to be different. We begin to realise that to 'go in peace' means that we leave church with the intention of making peace happen in our personal lives and in what is happening around us.

Jesus is not only present in the bread and wine that we have just received but also in 'the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1373). We all know that love is more than just words. The Mass urges us to love God by acting against injustice, violence, war, prejudice - anything and everything that gets in the way of our loving one another.

We must also do the small, everyday things that strengthen our human family. We can expect some conflict and struggle in representing the peace of Christ because this message does not mirror victory through the exercise of power as we have come to know and understand it in world terms.

We are told not only to love the Lord but also to 'serve the Lord'. We cannot leave church with our own agenda, expecting to do things our own way. It must be God's will that is done. The Mass helps us to overcome isolation and empowers us to recognize that so many others, because of their faith, are in the fight with us. The love of Christ, working in and through us, helps us to overcome all the fear, anger and anxiety that the world can muster.

Dorothy Day once remarked that if we could only remember that each one of us, from the highest royal realm to the lowliest, each one is created in God's image - if we could just remember that truth, then it would inspire us to love more. In the faces of those she served and cared for, she saw the image of Christ.

Front Cover Photo

Statue recently installed in the church of Fr Jules Chevalier (1824-1907)
Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Congregation.

Donated by Ms Annette Marskell OAM

Photo: Rebecca Lazenby

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GOODBYE SAUDI ARABIA HELLO RANDWICK

FRANCIS DE LOS SANTOS

Arriving in Randwick for the De Los Santos family has been an unusual journey. Here Francis recalls some highlights.

'I met Mila in 1985 in Saudi Arabia but it was a long courtship' says Francis. 'We both worked there – I, with an engineering firm, Mila, as a nurse – but the Saudi Government does not allow men courting single ladies in the open, or dating and dining in any restaurant or any public places or food marts.

The penalties are severe and I used various subterfuges to visit her. In 1988 however we were granted leave and we went home to the Philippines to be married and were able to start work again as lawfully wedded husband and wife'.

For the next 16 years they lived in Saudi Arabia where their three children –Francis Gerald, Geraldine and Gayzelle – were born and were baptized as Catholics by an American friend who facilitated the baptism inside a western expatriates' compound. A secret Catholic Mass was held weekly by an American priest disguised as an Engineering Consultant. In Saudi Arabia, there were no churches, synagogues or chapels and the government does not allow or permit expatriates to build any edifices, structures or images that contradict their Muslim beliefs.

'Our children' says Francis 'were able to enrol in an International School and as a Catholic family, we were able to secretly attend prayer meetings in various places. We joined the Couples for Christ while our 3 young children joined the Legion of Mary. Our children also attended Catechism classes every week, prayed the Rosary, and were excited to join us in our daily prayers. We hosted household meetings, prayed, sang, conducted prayer healing sessions and our children and our friends' children joined us in all our weekly activities'.

In 2000 the family travelled to Rome for the Jubilee Year. At the Mass the pilgrims were asked to stand and wave their country's flag and be seen on the giant screen. There was a



GERALDINE, MILA, FRANCIS, GERALD AND GAYZELLE.

loud applause as hundreds of people representing their own country waved as their faces were shown on the giant screen. 'When Saudi Arabia was called, only 5 of us stood up waving the Saudi Arabian flag in our left hand and the Philippine flag in our right hand to the surprise of everyone who looked at our family with disbelief. We were a lone Filipino family representing Saudi Arabia, the Muslim capital of the world. Wonderful!'

When the Muslim extremists in Saudi started their reign of terror in 1997 the family felt that it was not safe anymore to stay in the country. The final decision came when the extremists attacked their home in Al-Khobar killing 25 foreign nationals comprising Italians, Canadians, British, and Americans including 3 Filipinos. Mila was working in the hospital when the bodies of the massacred victims were brought in.

'So on 4 July 2004', said Francis, 'we decided to call it quits bringing truckloads of personal belongings that we had kept for years living together as a family. Upon setting foot in Sydney on 27 August 2004, the first place we visited was Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Randwick and attended our first Mass in Australia.

We were warmly welcomed by Father John Shalvey, who introduced us to the congregation as new migrants of Randwick and a devoted Catholic family as well. We were all surprised by this warm welcome by the church and the Randwick parishioners and we felt that our decision in making Australia our new home was definitely the right one'.

'Life has been good to us in Australia' says Francis. 'Mila is a clinical nurse specialist in the renal ward at POW Hospital and Geraldine is a registered nurse in their urology unit. Gazelle is enrolled in a university Digital Media course. Both my daughters attended OLSH College in Kensington and Francis (better known as Gerald – can't have two Francis in the one family) attended Marcellin College and is now a final year electrical engineering student at UNSW. I'm happily working in customer service with Roads and Maritime Services'.

Francis has been a Reader and is now an Acolyte and acts also as an Acolyte at neighboring Churches. Gerald is also now a Reader and the family is active in the parish. Francis is also active in the Filipino-Australian Community. 'Our hearts' says Francis 'are Filipino but Randwick is **our new found home**'.

ON THE WAY TO BECOMING A PRIEST

KRISH JON MATHAVAN

It is always a blessing to be asked to take stock of my own journey and vocation in becoming a Missionary of the Sacred Heart (MSC), and perhaps this is a good time to do it as I approach the end of my theological studies.

It was just over a year ago that I professed perpetual vows and committed my life to being a MSC, and arguably that has been my greatest celebratory moment of grace in terms of responding most concretely and authentically to God's love and intimacy revealed in the person of Jesus and overflowing into my life.

Where does priesthood sit in all of this? Let me pen a few thoughts down on what the next stage of ordination means for me. I must admit that when I first joined the MSCs, priesthood was not a strong part of my discernment and even until recently there was some resistance and uncertainty when approaching ordination. There were two aspects of this that I was able to identify.

One was my seeing the priesthood as merely functional in terms of ministering the sacraments, carrying out administration and offering spiritual leadership and guidance. These were all important ministries but somehow the inherent logic of 'MSC is who I am, ordained ministry is what I do' seemed overly simplistic and dualistic.

Another aspect was the privilege and power that accompany priesthood, which often made me uncomfortable especially when I consider the abuse of power and cover-ups that have occurred in the child sexual abuse scandal. What has been helpful for me was to frame the question of

priesthood in terms of identity and being, which is *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ).

This means taking seriously the ontological change that comes with the ministering of the sacrament of orders, of becoming Christ for the Church and the world. The sacrament formalises and provides the grace for the journey to participate deeply into the threefold office of Christ as priest, prophet and king. This is shared by all Christians by virtue of their baptism, with the ministerial priesthood in particular at the service of the common priesthood in order to build up the body of Christ.

This threefold office can be expressed as giving one's life in service for others through speaking up and acting against injustices, and mediating intimacy with God through symbols and rituals that reflect Christ's action to baptise, anoint, consecrate, forgive, heal and unite. As such the priesthood of Christ does not merely perform a sacramental office but implies a pastoral and relational leadership that includes prophetic and kingly responsibilities to empower the people of God to bring about God's reign in the world.

The meaning of the priesthood then is not merely derived from his sacramental function as much as from his spiritual leadership within a Eucharistic community. The priest therefore represents both Christ and the Church. The sacramental 'power' of the priest is in reality a grace within the Church to enable the self-emptying for others.

The notion of priesthood has become much richer for me when I am conscious of this call to open myself to being transformed into the person



of Christ in order to effectively exercise his servant leadership for the Church. As such, ministerial priesthood should be marked by responsibility and relationship rather than power and office which tend to reduce it to being about performing an indispensable function or being superior to the laity, trappings that one can easily fall into.

For me, being ordained demands prayer that is knowing Christ and coming to a deeper consciousness of Christ-in-me as my inner authority that transforms me to truly live a priestly vocation. It is surely a lifelong journey that requires commitment and courage to remain faithful to being a visible Christ in the world, and embodying him consistently through my words, rituals and relationships.

It is about who I am becoming rather than simply what I do, and this has helped me to discern its call as being authentic and life-giving for me as I continue the journey of being on earth the Heart of God.

Krish's ordination to the Diaconate is scheduled for 26 November 2016 at the 6pm Mass in St Thomas the Apostle parish at Blackburn, Victoria.

THE 'YURANGAI' EXPERIENCE

JO DAVISON

Jo Davison is an OLSH Primary School Mum. Here she writes about another and very different school.

The building in Waterloo is nothing to speak of....it is pretty old, the windows have bars, the wall littered with graffiti. To gain entry, it's a 'Cooee' through the letterbox. Up the stairs, through the large iron gate...and you're in. Twenty five scruffy, but gorgeous little faces greet you. Primary school aged children...predominantly Indigenous.

This is 'Yurangai', an after school learning centre primarily for local Indigenous children at risk, run by Barnardos. These children are picked up and brought here each afternoon to be fed, to be helped with their school work and to interact with wonderful staff who cast a loving eye over each of them.

So what relationship would a Coogee Mums running group have with Yurangai? Well....it's a funny thing. The Coogee Cougars are a 400 plus band of fit, local Mums who run together, train together, compete together and support each other. Between the 400 of them, they would have in excess of 1000 children -children who have pretty good lives.



Coogee Cougars formation wasn't premeditated. It all began in June in 2009 when a fellow OLSH Mum asked me to take her for a run in an attempt for her to improve her 'City to Surf' time. I happily obliged. As a runner of over 25 years the bug was well and truly nestled within me! We went for our first run together at 5.45am on that Thursday morning, and week by week another Mum came, and another, and another and another. Now, every Thursday during school



term time, a band of women meet to cover 6, 8, or 10kms, all before 7am. An email goes out the day before to over 420 women so everyone knows the route!

Back to Barnardos. In 2010, the Coogee Cougars were approached to fundraise for Barnardos. Quick as a flash \$10,000 was raised and a relationship initiated. Financial donations continued and in 2015 I learned of Yurangai and the work they do. By chance I met with the wonderful Viv who runs Yurangai as I was placing my jacket in the cloak room of Kirribilli House at a morning tea for the announcement of Barnardos 'Mother of the Year'. Her smile was warm and her laugh infectious.

We chatted, and I learned of Yurangai and the challenges the kids faced; foster care, separation from parents, exposure to drug and alcohol addiction and parents incarcerated. A far cry from the life our Cougars children face. I vowed there and then to make a commitment to be involved with these children.

Barnardos and Yurangai receive no government funding. They rely solely on the generosity of donations. Yurangai was in dire need of day to day essentials. Stationery, art supplies, non-perishable food items, vouchers for the purchasing of wet weather gear for the children, a laminator, a hard drive.... stuff! I approached my Cougars, and before I knew it we had 20 boxes filled with all of the above. The centre was restocked.

Xmas 2015 approached. The Cougars decided that a book,

individually chosen for each child would be something they wouldn't normally receive. Armed with \$1000 (\$500 collected from the Cougars themselves, and \$500 from a generous Anonymous Donor), I walked into Dymocks and spent the lot on books for the children. The look on each child's face when they received their book was priceless!

In addition to helping the children with tangible items, I wanted us to be able to develop a more personal relationship with Yurangai. A commitment was made for a monthly afternoon visit by three or four of us, to help with homework, hear them read, or just have a chat. We have also brought experiences to them - an afternoon's karaoke, a photo booth and photographer to take wonderfully candid photos, then picture frames for them to decorate the next visit and the photos printed for them to place inside. They have also experienced virtual travels through Papua New Guinea and Antarctica. They have seen the photos, warmed the palms and worn the thermal gear! Experiences that bring question after question from the children, their enquiring minds working overtime!

The children of Yurangai have untapped potential. They have hurdles in life to overcome, they have challenges to face. In the big grand scheme of things, what the Coogee Cougars can offer these children is but a drop in the ocean. However we are consistent in our visits, and genuine in our care and compassion and maybe, just maybe, a tiny difference is made. Either way....we will keep visiting!

A CHURCH IS NOT JUST A BUILDING

PETER JAMES

Peter James is a leading international cinematographer. An OLSH parishioner he attended OLSH primary school and Marcellin College. His work takes him all over the world and here he tells of his favourite church.

There are many beautiful churches says Peter James. One of my favourites is St Augustin in Vienna, a Gothic church built in the 14th century. All white, with a very high interior with clear windows and shiny brass chandeliers. There is a huge Choir loft which is filled with singers and musicians for the formal High Masses of Mozart, Mendelssohn and Schubert. It houses the Loreto Chapel where the 54 hearts of the Habsburgs are kept in silver urns.

But none compare to St Agatha's in South Central Los Angeles. Cheaply constructed in concrete, best described as looking like a cement rectangular box, with a plain altar and not enough parking. For many people it's in a No Go Area renowned for its gangs. Its beauty is in its congregation, predominately Hispanic and Black American and the atmosphere created by a charismatic priest, Fr Ken Deasy*.

This parish has become a place where all feel welcome and where the parishioners are empowered to find a joyous expression of their faith. Mass is not as we know it, more to the rhythm and harmony of a Gospel Mass with an emphasis on African-American music. There is no reluctance or embarrassment to holding hands or swaying with the music.

The choir is the whole congregation often singing to a jazz music background, lots of clapping and lots of children involved. At one stage in the choir there were 15 Grammy Nominees (the record industry's most outstanding prestigious award). 'Absolutely remarkable', says Peter. 'And', he adds, 'remarkably different to the High Masses at St Augustin's. The Choir perform at the 'Gospel Brunch' at The HOUSE OF BLUES each year. The money raised sends the kids to Summer Camp'.

...the Sign of Peace is real...

The sermons reflect Fr Ken's dynamism, bringing new hope to those struggling in a neighbourhood where poverty, crime and despair are part of everyday life. 'If you've ever had the privilege of being in church when Father Ken gets fired up, then you know that he is funny, honest and open about what it means to be a good person, not just a good Catholic', is a typical report from a Mass attendee.

The fervour in the Sign of Peace is real - a genuine hugging of each other and sometimes the greeting



takes five minutes. Mass does not end with the Final Blessing. All gather for refreshments, tacos of course, and the children play on the adjacent lawn.

Fr Deasy bought the house next door. Most thought it would be for parking but no, he converted it to a lawn area for a children's play area as most parishioners live in apartments. The presbytery is sparse and the garage now houses the parish boat, used to take the children on picnics and water skiing.

Some time ago the diocese closed their local school. For the parishioners it was another setback to their area. Encouraged by Fr Ken the parents and the teachers rallied for its re-opening and it is now operated by the parents and teachers.

Fr Ken's ability to bring together people of different backgrounds, lifestyles, cultures and ages with his message of compassion and God's love for all that makes St Agatha's a real place of worship not just a church building.

*Fr Deasy originally a Franciscan, then a diocesan priest, is now helping people in the missions. He has written a book *Get Off The Cross, Someone-Else Needs The Wood* - a revealing look at the struggles, joys and nonsense that comes with being a progressive Catholic priest. The parishioners continue his work; the church, simple in construction remains the centre piece of activity for its surrounding community.



fatherken.org <http://www.facebook.com/FatherKensVineyard>

THE STORY OF SR HELEN ARMSTRONG

Helen Armstrong, a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart tells us a little about her life and her activities in South Africa.

I was born the youngest of twin girls in Sydney way back in May 1946.

My primary schools years were spent at St Michael's Daceyville which was then staffed entirely by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was at this time that my association with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Randwick began. I have fond memories of playing netball there at the primary school and afterwards being treated to a delicious afternoon tea in Ventnor. I cannot remember who won the game only that the food was good!

OLSH College Kensington was the scene for the next stage of my education. The example of the Sisters had a very strong influence on my life. Inspired by their dedication, friendliness and simplicity I grew in my desire to enter and become one with them as a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The early years of my life as a Sister were spent in primary schools (both as teacher and in educational leadership) in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. This latter place still holds a very special place in my heart.

In the mid-eighties I was missioned to the Philippines where my ministry was focussed on the initial formation of young women wishing to share our charism and spirituality. I found the Filipino people to be very industrious and happy in spite of their dire poverty and daily hardship.

Even the very poor generously shared the little they had with others. Their hospitality knew no bounds. Our Sisters there spread the Good News of God's love mainly through education, pastoral and catechetical work in parishes and health care. They (the Sisters) stand in solidarity with the poor and support the people in their efforts toward liberty and justice.

Just over five years ago I was given the opportunity to go to South Africa (where I am now) and to work with our Sisters whose ministry is primarily with orphans and vulnerable children. Here in the Diocese of Tzaneen in the Province of Limpopo (the most rural and poorest of the provinces) we try to make a difference to the lives of the countless number of children who are orphaned or abandoned or abused or homeless, or ill or all of these.

...Their hospitality knows no bounds...

The Holy Family Care Centre at Ofcolaco as well as Bakhita Village at Dwars River provides residential care for these needy little ones. As well, we manage outreach projects in the numerous villages within the diocese. Each month we provide food/clothing/educational support/health care and more to at least 400 children. In the belief that education is the ticket to freedom for these

young people we give financial assistance for secondary and /or tertiary education. In some cases we also provide basic housing for the orphans.

Our generous funders (from Australia including OLSH School Randwick, and Europe) make all of this work possible. We thank God for them and we ask God's blessing for all our efforts done in God's name and for God's glory.

As I conclude this small article the words of the Prayer of St Francis come to mind: *"It is in giving that we receive....."* This has certainly been true for me. The Sisters with whom I work as well as the poor for whom we labour continue to inspire me and teach me how to live a life worthy of my calling to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus everywhere loved!



ORPHAN HOUSE IN MUSINA



FLOWERS ARE SPECIAL FOR ME

ANITA KAHONO

I have loved flowers and working with flowers for as long as I can remember. In 1985 I opened a small florist in my home in Jakarta, Indonesia. I came to Sydney with my husband and 13-year-old son after the big riot in Jakarta in 1998. My daughter who was 18 at the time was already living in Australia as she was studying at UNSW.

The first five years were very tough for us as we had to learn to communicate fluently, adapt to a culture and lifestyle completely different from what we were used to in Indonesia, and start a new life with a laborious line of work which we had never experienced.



Easter

We found a business opportunity running a donut shop at Westfield Eastgardens Shopping Centre. In the first few months my husband and I would make donuts from 2 o'clock in the morning. After we found a cook we were able to start work a bit later at 4.30am. At 8am my husband would go straight to his office in the city while I would stay behind and work at the shop until 7pm. It was very exhausting and stressful.

After we sold the donut business in 2004, I was longing to work as a florist again. I realised I really missed making flower arrangements. In 2004 I enrolled in a floristry course at TAFE but was rejected, as I did not meet the requirement of having



Easter

experience working at a florist business in Australia. I was very upset, but to my surprise the teacher called me and gave me the opportunity to do the course, provided that I could find work in a florist as soon as possible so the teacher could examine my competency at the shop.

After trying to obtain an apprenticeship at many flower shops, I was finally offered a position at a small florist at Randwick Plaza as junior florist. A year later I found myself working at a different florist in Kensington which specialised in weddings and events. Those two years studying at TAFE were some of the happiest years of my life. The cultural differences between Indonesia and Australia also meant different floral arrangement styles and designs, and it was thrilling to learn so many new things and apply them.

When I started the course, I applied as a volunteer at the parish to help with flower arrangements and I was accepted into the Altar Society. I had never arranged church flowers



Feast of OLSH

before and had no idea how to arrange flowers for the altar, so the Leaders of the Altar Society and the senior florist in the church taught me how to do church flower arrangements, which is a quite a unique and specialised skill set.

I learned a lot of things from them that weren't taught at TAFE, such as church flowers **need to be big** enough to be seen from a distance and designed a certain way to complement the different themes throughout the church calendar for example, Easter, Christmas and Pentecost.



Feast of OLSH

Three months after I joined the volunteers team, the senior florist resigned due to his illness, so with very limited experience in church flowers I had to start doing the flower arrangements by myself, but after I finished my TAFE course I became more confident in doing the flowers.

Making church flower arrangements is my way to thank God for helping us in our difficulties during the hard times leaving Indonesia and moving to Australia, for giving us a new home and new friends in Australia, and for all the blessings He gives everyday to our family.

I would like to thank everyone in this church for helping and supporting me in my duties as parish florist.

'She is at the Flemington markets at 5.00am to get the best quality flowers for the cheapest price, when there is a special occasion. All of which is voluntary.'

GOD GAVE ME THE UMBRELLA BEFORE IT RAINED

JACKIE FRENCH

Jackie French is the best-selling author of over 140 books including the iconic Diary of a Wombat. She has received more than 60 awards for her writings. She was the Australian Children's Laureate for 2014-2015 and the 2015 Senior Australian of the Year. Here she writes for our magazine.

I didn't mean to be a children's author. I wanted to be a writer, deeply, but parents and teachers told me no one could make a living writing in Australia. Choose another job, and don't waste time writing.

I did keep writing, and creating stories for friends and my brother and sister. But the writing was kept secret till with a failed marriage, and a baby, living in a shed in the bush, I desperately needed \$146.44 to register my car. So I sent a story to a publisher, and once they had stopped laughing at the spelling (I'm dyslexic) and all the 'e's written in biro (the typewriter I'd found at the dump didn't work after the wombat we were living with decided to leave his droppings on it every night) they decided to publish it. Within three

...A book can change a child's life...

weeks of sending off that story, and two articles, I have supported my family as an author ever since.

I hadn't meant to write for kids. But that first story had a child protagonist, and so was classified as a children's book. So I kept writing for young people, as well as works for adults. I didn't dream of being an advocate for dyslexia either, the right of every child to learn to read. But each time I spoke at a school exposing how the publishers had chortled at my spelling mistakes and wombat smudges, there'd be a small core of fidgeting, or aggressive kids who'd look up with sudden stillness and dawning hope. Dyslexic, like me. But, unlike me, no one had taught them how to read.

Gradually, parents and teachers began to appeal for help. Ironically, I am possibly the least able person to

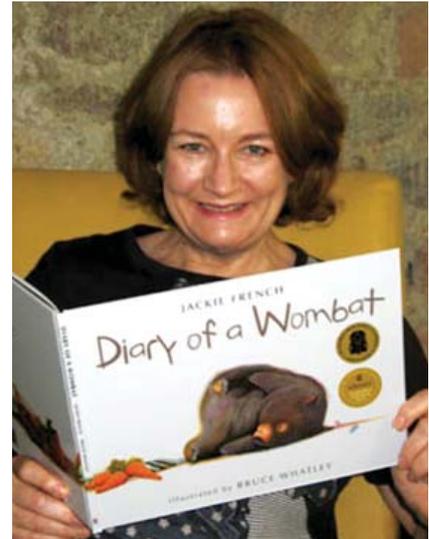
teach anyone to read - I am not even sure how I read myself. But I am good with words, spoken or written. And the more tragedies I saw, the more passionate I became.

Three years ago I visited a men's prison, where every man there but one admitted he could not read. 'What choice did I have?' asked one. 'You can't even stack shelves in a supermarket if you can't read?' Possibly more choices than armed robbery. But he had a point. These days you are cut off from jobs, social media, and so much else - including all the forms we must fill in for modern life - if you cannot read.

One in five Australian kids do not reach international reading benchmarks. One in ten has major problems. One in 11 may never learn to read fluently - without specialised help.

Until recently, we had no strong evidence about the effectiveness of various methods and programs to help kids, and adults, who cannot read. Now there has been enough research to show that many so called solutions are not effective, like Reading Recovery, as well as what programs do work. Reading Recovery has helped many kids, but, often because of the experience and dedication of the teachers who are using it. A year later kids may be even further behind, as the school thinks: problem solved. Worse: the child may feel it is their fault. It is so very easy to teach a child that they are stupid.

This matters. Books are not just places to find information. Every book a child reads creates new neurons and connections between those neurons in a child's brain. If we want intelligent kids, give them books. If we want MORE intelligent kids, give them more books.



If we want adults with empathy, give our children books, because when kids read they become every character in the book. If we want kids who understand what it is like to feel another's pain, give them books. If we want adults who will find ways to mine the asteroids, or solve the moral and ecological problems of this world, give them books, because books teach creativity. Genius is as much imagination as intelligence - and imagination is contagious. You catch it from books.

Kindness is contagious too. So is hatred, and forgiveness, love and joy. This is the knowledge I hope kids take from my books, even though they may not realise the values they absorb while reading. But what about the kids who prefer computer or TV screens? Remember that adults are kids' enablers. They can only read if you give them books. Take them to the library. Show them the information section, too. Let them choose the books that fascinate them, and give them permission to put a boring book down and choose another.

Sometime in the past few decades I became a children's writer by passion and conviction, trying to write the books kids need, as well as advocate for getting books to kids, evidence based literacy and the power of story to change the world.

And somewhere in that time I became a Catholic, not just a loiterer in whatever church I happened to

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ELLA STACK A BRIGIDINE GIRL

Ella Stack was in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy hit the city with the loss of 66 lives. She was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for her efforts in the reconstruction of the city. Here she reflects on the influence of Brigidine College.

Dr Ella Stack is deeply respectful to the Brigidine Sisters for their wonderful influence which has guided important decisions in her life. She became a Brigidine Randwick boarder and student in the Intermediate Class in 1942. She had been a most successful music student, having passed all examination grades from 1 to 6 in both violin and piano.

It was with great joy that she looked forward to returning to her musical studies by attempting her Associate in Music Australia (A Mus A) in the piano. Another great joy she happily noted was that physical punishment was not part of the training of students in Brigidine Colleges.

So she was all set to go when Mother Thomas, who had responsibility for the Intermediate Class, consulted Mother Cecilia – a gifted music teacher with the voice of an angel.

The problem was, should she attempt the rather heavy program to obtain her A Mus A while also dealing with the extra school work entailed with the Intermediate class. Mother Cecilia resolved this by pointing out that the music exams could be attempted in three months time, leaving the remainder of the year free for preparation for the Intermediate. Mother Cecilia then gave me so much encouragement and confidence. She said you must develop faith in yourself and a determination to succeed.

This sense of fearlessness became part of my outlook then, and ever since. I sat for the A Mus A and succeeded three months later. Both teachers were most encouraging.

Later in life, when Cyclone Tracy destroyed the wonderful city of Darwin on Christmas morning 1974, I was approached by the then Mayor



who requested that I stand for the position of Mayor in the expected triennial elections in May 1975. The words of Mother Cecilia came back so clearly, so I said 'yes'. I became Mayor of a heap of rubble and with much help we all worked with faith and a fearless determination to succeed in returning Darwin to the beautiful city it now is.

Continued from page 9

be near, or the solo prayer, who enjoyed reading theology, but instead, someone who wished to be part of a congregation of goodwill. Was it twenty years ago, when, desperate, having never prayed to a saint - nor was Mary McKillop a saint then - I prayed to her to help someone I loved, and felt my prayer answered?

I was brought up an Anglican, but possibly the turning point was sitting with a conference of Catholic teachers and librarians, joining in prayer before we began, and realising the power of praying together. Looking back, there have been a million threads slowly joined that led me to St Bedes Church in Braidwood, and the wisdom of Father Peter, Brother Brian and the women of the congregation who have given me so much inspiration and guidance.

Three months later, triple tragedy left me (almost) unable to cope. But God had given me the umbrella, the

Church, the community of goodwill, who helped me pray for strength. And because of them, all through that time I saw the beauty of the world around me, and felt God's strength and love, even when, or possibly especially, when following that speeding ambulance to hospital.

To all who'd like to help kids find the worlds that books can give them: Read to kids, your own family, or volunteer to read at lunch time at school. Stop at a cliffhanger to tempt kids to read more. Give books, to all kids who need them. A book can change a child's life. Knowing that someone cares enough to give them books, and help them read, will change their lives too, just as it changed mine.

Remember that the way kids are taught will give them values, a sense of belonging in a community of goodwill. Read with love, listen with love, and that will change a child's world as well.

...Read to kids...

Volunteer to train as a reading tutor - these days we know that all kids with problems must have trained tutors, and that well-meaning help without training may do more harm than good. Volunteer as a reading buddy at your local school - not a literacy tutor, for dyslexic kids or those with other literacy problems but to be there for kids who don't have problems, to help them with a word or two and praise and encourage.

Gather books for kids in need, including homeless or couch surfing kids who may not have a secure place to store them, and so need to be given more books often. A book will not just give fun, escape and literacy skills. It will also show that life does not have to be like this. Because that is what books gave me, in the horror that was my teenage years. I knew, always, that, somehow, life could be good. Because of those books, because of the love that came with them, life has been very good indeed.

BR VINCE SHEKLETON A VARIED LIFE

It was at Marist Brothers High School Kogarah in 1938 when Vince Shekleton decided to join the Marist Order. 'And I could never have imagined' said Br Vince 'how varied and rewarding it has been. My first posting was as a secondary teacher in Lismore in 1944, and a couple of years later I was both teaching, and studying blacksmithing and later, woodturning skills at the Sydney Technical College Ultimo'.

Those skills were handy when he was posted to the Solomon Islands for three years in 1951 where he worked in a school conducted by the Marist Brothers. One of his roles was that of Farmer – growing corn, sweet potatoes, peanuts, cassava and rice to feed the students.

Appointed to Sacred Heart Primary School at Rabaul in 1955, he taught the sons of Chinese residents and made lifelong friends of their families. He has also taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to students unfamiliar with the English Language. Looking back on his career, he said he enjoyed teaching ESL in Brisbane, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, and China'.

An early highlight was spending time in 1969 in Fribourg Switzerland. Why? 'It is where the Marist Brothers had their Renewal Program. And I was able to walk in the steps of our founder Marcellin Champagnat, and also visit our General House in Rome. I was revitalised'.

In 1974 he taught in the Marist school in Kieta, on the Island of Bougainville. Not just teaching Agriculture, but helping with his wood work skills. 'Multitasking' was not a word then but he seems to have been doing it all through his career. He took a pause from teaching in 1979 and had a stint in the Administration at Chanel College in Gladstone, Queensland.

For the next few years Br Vince taught ESL at three schools in

Brisbane while also attending Mt Gravatt Teachers College to acquire his formal Diploma of Teaching in Manual Arts. The Queensland Government was insistent that any form of teaching required tertiary qualifications. It was not a problem



for him, as he later acquired his Bachelor of Education and various other educational qualifications which proved beneficial later when applying for a teaching position in China.

It was back to Europe in 1985 as manager of the Fran-La- Mar Pilgrimage, taking with him a group of handicapped adults from Queensland's Little King Movement. It was an opportunity to offer them visits to Catholic shrines and deepen their awareness of God's love. 'It was a wonderful experience for me too', he said 'I pushed wheelchairs all over Europe and Israel and was rewarded by the joy on their faces'.

...I was revitalised...

Thailand was another location for our travelling Brother, where he worked for two years in the Phanat Nikhom Refugee Camp for the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees. First he taught English to refugees from Cambodia

and Vietnam, and then prepared other refugees, who had already been selected by the Department of Immigration, to get a working knowledge of what their future life in Australia would be like.

In 1989 Br Vince was accepted to teach English to Second Year students at Sichuan International Studies University in Chongqing, in central China. It was a challenging assignment, for he knew no Mandarin Language, but sympathetic teachers and students soon made him feel welcome and at ease. It was the first of many visits to China, culminating in the teaching of Listening Skills to Chinese teachers of English in Southern China in 2003 and 2005.

He returned to PNG in 1994, and taught ESL in the "Come-and-See" course – a Marist residential program for young men interested in joining The Marist Brothers.

Retirement from teaching in schools in 1999, aged 75, gave him a new outlet for his enthusiasm, volunteering to work on outback stations for the education of Isolated children. 'Some people' he says 'think only of the Marist Brothers as conducting schools, but their mission is much broader. We are an International Order, working with at-risk youth, conducting retreats, counselling and ministering to overseas communities. My travels are part of that ministry'.

So, what has motivated Br Vince? Well, he says, 'mission work overseas and teaching language skills, is what I have enjoyed most, and the notion of volunteering to help is very rewarding. Travelling has been a big part of my life. 'I've been everywhere' could well have been written about me' he says jokingly. And now I'm enjoying the company of my Brother companions at our House in Randwick'. He's also working on the family history of the Shekletons, who first arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1840. It's a never-ending story.

IGNORANCE, BLISS AND RELIGIONS

CARMEL MAGUIRE

Preaching atop my comfortable superannuated soapbox, I am appalled that 9% of Queenslanders have voted for Pauline Hanson and her party. I am a long way from those who have lost jobs in the mines and in a tourist industry hit hard by the deterioration of the Great Barrier Reef. It is ironic that, among Hanson voters, there appears to be a widespread belief that climate change is a myth, promulgated by us city folk.

For them I guess it's very unlikely to be a great time to be alive in Australia, even though it's definitely better than to be in a detention centre, inshore or off. A combination of resentment among the poor and irritation at loss of privilege among the comfortable makes a highly combustible mix.

One example is the change verging on chaos in the no longer United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. One of the sad changes may be the return of the border posts between North and South in Ireland, which the Good Friday agreement dispensed with.

On the wider world canvas, even in the never guilty West, the style of overblown rhetoric adopted by Boris Johnson and Donald Trump to achieve their ends is almost as obnoxious as their self-serving political philosophies. At least Boris is a player in a little league, Trump, on the other hand, seeks to captain a team in the biggest league there is.

With continuing mayhem in the Middle East, splashing over into many other locations, it's hard not to worry that, here and abroad, Pope Francis's year of mercy is tending in the opposite direction.

In all this, despite the saturation of the news media and the blasts of opinion in the Twitter-sphere, Australians seem not to be well-informed. Could there be an inverse



relationship between the number of words and pictures which bombard us and the degree to which we acquire knowledge?

An eighteenth-century English poet used sarcasm to warn us: 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise'. There seems to be a prevailing myth, certainly in the media, and even sometimes in the pulpit, that any other than superficial discussion of the world's major concerns is to be avoided.

I am not suggesting, for example, that most of us are as ignorant of Islam as Senator Hanson, but I suggest that most of us have not begun to appreciate the depth and the causes of the animosity between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and the geopolitical consequences. There is an excellent article entitled 'Inside obedient Islamic minds' in the April New York Review of Books, which points out that 'Sunni Islam, in contrast to Shiism, contains a strand of dogma that is irrational because God's commands are supposed to be accepted without being questioned'.

A friend in Iran who has read the article comments that 'One movement [Shiite] has been and still is attempting to reform the Islamic thoughts and practices to make life more adjustable to the modern time but the other movement [Sunni] has been and still is terribly trying to concentrate

on some fundamental ideas and practices to keep their followers away from the consequences of modern civilization'. He also warns that 'The war between Sunnis and Shiites is spreading and getting out of control'.

Any Christians inclined to see these problems as known only to the major sects of Islam may want to ponder the scandal of the situation which until recently prevailed in Northern Ireland and the problems inherent in Christian fundamentalism. My Iranian friend continues: 'Unfortunately none of the leaders of the two most important Sunni and Shiite countries [Saudi Arabia and Iran] believe in compromise and stopping the spread of a human and money consuming war. Unfortunately, the international companies and trusts, whose income comes from selling arms, make the situation worse'. My friend laments that 'our educational systems have not been able to develop open minds, able to think logically, rationally, and positive. So people can be easily masterminded'.

I began with one example of a 'masterminding' of a sizable proportion of the Australian public by a political party which has called for a royal commission into Islam – bring it on, say I, and dispel some of our ignorance which is certainly not bliss for us or for our refugee detainees on Manus and Nauru.

A LETTER FROM THE OUTBACK

VICKI BOURNE-FALLON

Vicki Bourne-Fallon, Principal of St Ignatius Parish School, Bourke writes of life in the Outback.

As the torrential rain came pouring down across the dirt playground, about 80 children stopped playing and watched in delight. 'Wow! Isn't this great?' 'Dad will be happy' were different comments exclaimed in the excitement. This certainly was not the introduction to the dusty plains of the Outback I had been expecting in my first weeks at St Ignatius.

...the need for rain...

After a year living in Bourke, I now have a deeper appreciation of the need for rain and the impact it has on those living in this town. So the children's delight with the onset of rain and their knowledge of such events is clear from a young age. They are surrounded by talk of the weather and how this affects the lives of so many.

The Darling River, flowing beautifully after the latest rainfall, is such a focal point for the town. It has a rich history as a means of transportation in bygone eras and now the children as well as many tourists enjoy yabbing, fishing, water skiing or taking a leisurely cruise on the replica paddleboat 'Jandra.' Beautiful bird and wildlife are seen along the riverbank. Celebrating Australia Day at the local wharf by the big gum trees, as a cool breeze drifted over us and a flock of cockatoos overhead was certainly a unique experience.

St Ignatius Parish School, sitting just beside the river, has 91 children and 18 staff who come together to form a strong learning community. 45% of the children and 22% of staff have Aboriginal backgrounds, from one of the many mobs that call Bourke home. The majority of the school population live in town; however a few live on outlying

properties that can take up to an hour to travel into school.

Despite some extremely challenging family circumstances, the resilience of the children is inspiring. They have a great sense of pride in Bourke. Yes, they love to be with their mates - some have known each other since the day of their birth in Bourke Hospital and have grown up together in pre-school, sports teams, swimming club or Little Athletics, at the local PCYC, camping or sleeping over on weekends, in fishing competitions and motor bike riding and now being together at school.



The staff are very committed to the children and their wellbeing. Some are locals who have a strong connection to the community and have a vast knowledge of the history of each student. Others are younger people who have a deep sense of contribution and have left their homes to bring education to the children in a remote community. Dom Fallon, my husband is the music teacher and has been supportive of my need to work in a different community.

When we arrived, Fr John Shalvey was the parish priest, a welcoming, familiar face from our Antioch days in the Randwick and Maroubra parishes. Along with the Missionaries of Charity, (Mother Therese's Order of Sisters) and now Father Magnus Kobbi, we



are part of the Holy Spirit Parish and endeavour to bring parish and school together.

Coming from the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney school to the Outback has been an amazing experience. We do miss our families and friends, although many have taken the opportunity to visit us in our new surrounds. They have commented on our more relaxed demeanours with a much slower pace of life. My experience of a traffic jam is having to wait at the 'Give Way' sign behind a truckload of goats and cattle. The 90 second commute to work certainly has its advantages over the two hours I battled on Friday afternoons on the M4.

The resilience of the children...

We have had some interesting encounters with wildlife from brown snakes in the school hall and outside the Administration door to a recent confrontation with a kangaroo and our car on the long straight road from Nyngan, a rite of passage here. The sunsets however are awe-inspiring with the vast array of colour over the wide open plains, a sight to behold.

We are unsure as to how long we will stay in this community, but are grateful that we have the opportunity to see another perspective of life in Australia, one so different from our upbringing in Sydney. Be sure to call in and see us if you are ever in Bourke!

CHURCH & NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

FR PATRICK SHARPE msc

When the Servant of God, Father Jules Chevalier, the Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary the title, 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart', in 1857, he did so as an act of thanksgiving for her special assistance in making it possible for him to found our Congregation.

Fr Chevalier wrote, 'This title means that Mary is **our** Queen, **our** Mother and consequently, **Our Lady**'. He was convinced that Mary would hear every prayer made to her under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

One of his favourite Gospel stories was the Marriage Feast at Cana, where at Mary's request Jesus turned water into wine. He wrote of the wonderful influence Mary had over the Heart of her Son.

This Gospel story was the Gospel of the very first Mass of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. While the emphasis may have changed, it is still very much part of the Thursday Novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart which draws people to this Church each week, to pray for their special needs and intentions.

But as Mary said to the servants, so she says to us today, 'Do whatever he tells you'. It is Mary who presents our petitions to her Son on our behalf but we must accept his reply.

But Jules Chevalier also stood, as it were, with Mary at the foot of the Cross and saw the side of Jesus pierced with a lance and the blood and water flow from his side.

The Centurion's lance opened the way into the very heart of Jesus, as St. Augustine wrote, '*Longinus has opened*



the side of Christ for me, and I have entered in'. These are the riches that Father Chevalier believed were given, by her Son, into hands of His Mother, to be showered upon those who turn to her in their hours of need.

'Come to me', Jesus said, 'all you who labour and are heavenly burdened and I will give you rest'. It is Mary, His Mother that Jesus has entrusted all the graces and blessings of his Heart to bring true peace and rest to all who turn to her in their hour of need was the firm belief of Father Chevalier. It was from the flesh and blood of Mary that the heart of Christ was formed in her womb.

'Learn from me', Jesus said, 'For I am gentle and humble of heart'. It is also Mary who leads us into the love of her Son, into his Sacred Heart, to learn there what it means 'to be *gentle and*

humble of heart'! What it means to live a true 'heart spirituality'! St. Bernard assures us: '*With Mary as guide you cannot go astray . . . So long as she is in your mind you are free from deception*'.

Where better to learn how to love Jesus, where better to adore, praise thank and love Jesus than in his very Heart, and it is Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, who is our sure guide into true heart spirituality.

Pope Paul VI wrote beautifully of Mary as the woman of faith, as the strong but gentle woman, as the woman for our times.

The late Brother James Maher msc, in his song called Mary '**Woman** of the Sacred Heart', reminds us that she is one of us, a woman who had to live by faith, a woman who had to

stand on Calvary and see her Son die like a common criminal, still believing that he was the Messiah, the Holy One of God. It is she who will lead us into the depths of the Love of Christ, into the depths of the love of God made real and human in the Heart of Christ Jesus.

It is in this church, for over 130 years, that Mary has been honoured as Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It is the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. We as members of this parish community are in a very special way under her protection.

Let us realise this special privilege that we too can stand with Jules Chevalier, beside Mary on Calvary, and contemplate that pierced side of Christ and enter into the mystery of God's love made real for us in Jesus, the Christ.

ON THE ROAD TO KRAKÓW

Continued from The Back Page - Fr Peter

We travelled by bus from Budapest through Slovenia to Wadowice, the birthplace of John Paul II in Poland. The museum was excellent and we attended Mass in Polish in his parish Church next door. (Here we had our first taste of local Polish food and drink: very bracing indeed.)

Krakow, our destination, is a World Heritage listed city for its cultural and architectural value – well deserved. The ‘on-off the map’ history of Poland is truly amazing. Krakow is definitely the city of St John Paul II and St Faustina – whose twin shrines we pilgrimaged too. With the exception of the determined Alfin we did not get into John Paul II’s Basilica because of the crowds.



SALT MINES - WIELICZKA

A two hour tour of the famous salt mines outside Krakow was very rewarding. Great commentary and superbly sculpted chapels and shrines, like Lot’s wife, carved out of salt! We descended over 135 metres by stairs, but in the Year of Mercy, elevators took us to the sunlight at the end.

With hundreds of thousands of other pilgrims we visited Auschwitz-Birkenau the epicenter of the liquidation of European Jews on a previously unknown, and unthinkable industrial scale; 1,300,000 murdered in that one



BIRKENAU: “IF TREES COULD TALK, THEY WOULD WEEP.”

camp alone, including Romani, Communists, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses and over 2,000 Polish priests. The sheer scope of the evil is difficult to comprehend. Nothing at that site seemed to speak of resurrection, (unlike the catacombs of Rome): over 300 acres of desolation, suffering and dehumanization.

As a refuge from the sun we stood under some trees towards the end of our visit, only to read a sign that said that those very trees gave shelter to tens of thousands of already traumatized victims straight off the trains waiting to be gassed and cremated. Their ashes were thrown into a small dam nearby.

It seems to me that all humanity is on trial there – for it reminds us of the evil each is capable of given the right contexts. Such juxtaposition – the beauty of so much of European culture, religion, art, architecture, music, learning - and yet after a millennium of Christianity, this evil thrived until it was forcibly stopped. Kyrie Eleison, indeed.

The liturgy of the Welcoming Mass in a park to begin World Youth Day, together with the English Catechesis held in a huge circus tent, were exceptionally well presented – our catechesis was facilitated by a lively young adult group of Salvatorian parishioners from Australia.

Much walking and touring by foot found, on one occasion, three priests, quite lost, looking for yet another Baroque Church (I’m over Baroque now - and back to pure Gothic) and who happened to come

across a road along which the Pope was to pass on his visit to a hospital. We saw a fleeting glimpse of his smiling face through the window of his little blue Fiat – can be good to get lost! (This was the closest Tru and Alfin got as they were over half a km away as



WYD BLONIA PARK

concelebrants at the closing Mass! A TV screen is much more intimate on those occasions!)

The Papal liturgies were beautifully presented with a wide variety of (singable) music styles, profound lyrics, and a Pope whose homilies had the common touch reminding us all that the goal of the pilgrimage is an ever deepening encounter with Jesus Christ and the community of the Universal Church. Krakow should be very proud of its WYD presentation.

Our final two nights were in a Benedictine Monastery Guest House in the centre of the magnificent city of Vienna - convenient to everything, especially the Cathedral and other sites like the Belvedere Palace, made even more notable by the film *Woman in Gold*.

And so, this pilgrim certainly ‘met Jesus Christ’, especially his Presence, in the vitality of local churches and the joy of being Catholic in the multi-national young pilgrims. And in the remarkable histories – so often of endurance of the faith in contexts of evil and repression - and the hospitality and acceptance by the locals of such large crowds wherever we went.

Of course, there were the seemingly soul-draining Absences of Christ – but in fact his suffering face was to be found in those dark places where evil had its way. I feel we must be even more dedicated to making our own parishes, homes, school into holy places, where people have transforming encounters with the Presence, the mercy and love of Christ, and to have great expectations that Jesus can form us ‘to be the on Earth the Heart of Christ’.

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THE BACK PAGE

WITH FR PETER

This was my fourth World Youth Day – the first for Frs Alfin and Tru. We were in a friendly and joyful group of 44 mainly young adults from Antioch groups in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne.

In Rome our accommodation was at a Religious Order run hostel close to the Piazza Navona in central Rome. Three nights in Rome enabled us to have a guided tour of ancient Rome and the superb Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel and the Mater Admirabilis icon at the Trinità. The highlight for me was (again) the privilege of celebrating Mass at the tomb of St Peter directly below the High Altar of the Basilica. We prayed there for all of you, and at all the Holy Places we visited.

The sense of history is profound: the poverty of the Martyred Fisherman's last resting place and the splendor of the Basilica above provided quite a contrast. The small Quo Vadis Domine Church on the Via Appia preceded our visit to the catacombs of St Callixtus with hundreds of thousands of burials – a place of death, but filled with the sense of the joy of the resurrection.

From Rome we travelled by bus to the beautiful cliff-top city of Orvieto and its magnificent Cathedral. So much history – the Second Crusade was preached from here by St Bernard of Clairvaux; Popes retreated to the city when under siege in Rome; and a priest from Germany on pilgrimage to Rome with huge doubts about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist had his doubts quieted by drops of blood on the Altar Cloth (Corporal) at the elevation of the Host. The Corporal was not on display this time.



At Mass, Alfin and I sang the Latin Sequence for Corpus Christi, the Feast having its origins here, and written by St Thomas Aquinas on a visit in the mid-1200s – Tru turned the pages for us.

Next: Assisi, stretching along the side of its hill overlooking a beautiful valley induces one to contemplation – but only if one is inclined to it, I guess, as its history for centuries was one of rivalry and warfare with surrounding hilltop cities like Perugia and Orvieto. Francis was up to his neck in the strife until his conversion. Mass at his tomb was a singular privilege as was the visit to the first little Church he repaired, and St Clare's convent and incorrupt body.

From Assisi back to Rome and a flight to Budapest – twin cities straddling the mighty Danube with a public transport system to die for. Here we were guests of the local Antioch Communities (founded from Australia following the collapse of Communism in 1989) for homestays – except we three priests and three men stayed at a Cistercian Monastery. The heavy hand of Communism was evident as the Cistercians only retrieved the confiscated monastery and huge parish school together with a palatial convent girls school in the early 1990s. Many tours and meals concluded with 'night prayer' for the monastery dwellers in a bar before retiring. (The spirit of Chaucer).

Continue reading on Page 15 - On the Road to Krakow