

FCJnews

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The Magnificent Seven

What a wonderful gathering it was in the Genazzano chapel on 8 September when seven FCJ Sisters, with a combined commitment to vocation of 420 years, celebrated their jubilees.

At this special thanksgiving Eucharist to celebrate their years of devotion to the charism and service inspired by the foundress Marie Madeleine d’Houët were:

Catherine Flynn fcJ – 70 years; Rosemary Crowe fcJ; Joyce Stewart fcJ – 65 years; Joan Cartlidge fcJ; Cecilia Courtney fcJ; Maureen Martin fcJ – 60 years; Shirley Kimball fcJ – 40 years.



Sr Shirley celebrates her 40 year Jubilee

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Tending the gardens at Genazzano

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Sr Margaret Mary fcJ Boarding Bursary Concert

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Sr Shirley Kimball fcj

Carol Rosenhain

In 2019 one of the Society's Sisters celebrated her 40-year Jubilee. Unlike most Sisters who found their vocation early in life Shirley Kimball didn't receive God's call until she was in her late forties.

As a second child of Roy Kimball and Florence Griffiths, Shirley was born in Prahran in 1928 and baptised at St Mary's, East St Kilda, in 1931. She was educated locally for four years at Our Lady of Lourdes School in Armadale, before the family moved to Warragul and then Benalla. It was there, at St Joseph's School, and then the FCJ Convent that Shirley first encountered the FCJ Sisters. She readily responded to the distinctive qualities of her teachers – their gentleness, and encouragement of student progress and well-being. Although Shirley enjoyed school and did well, her parents decided she would leave at the end of Year 11 to work in her aunt and uncle's small drapery shop in Benalla. With her gregarious personality, it is little wonder that Shirley spent 12 very happy years, meeting, greeting, listening, sharing, and selling all manner of goods that comprised the eclectic range of the shop.

Shirley felt a strong pull towards teaching. She sought the counsel of Mother Euphemia King fcj, the Superior at Benalla Convent. From her, Shirley received encouragement to work and study as a student teacher for two years before passing her teaching qualification in 1960. She continued teaching Religion, English and Mathematics at Benalla for 16 years. Quietly independent, she drove, went to dances and even made her debut. One day in class, however, an event occurred that was to change her life's direction yet again. A bright boy put up his hand to ask a question. Shirley was genuinely unseated when he inquired, 'Why didn't you become a nun?' Shirley hadn't asked that question of herself until then, but it was to repeat in her consciousness throughout 1976. Finally, she recognised that this was God's call. With some uncertainty, Shirley decided to share her feelings with Sr Margaret Mary Kennedy fcj, the Regional Superior. As always Sr Margaret Mary was receptive and, knowing Shirley well, was prepared to deal with the unorthodox. Shirley was 48. She had genuine life experience and was not making a hasty decision. In conference with Sr Breda O'Farrell fcj, the Superior General, it was concluded that Shirley could bring

much to the FCJ Society. She was accepted, and began her postulancy on 2 February 1977 under the guidance of Sr Winifred Dando fcj and Sr Rosemary Crowe fcj.

In 1978 Shirley began her novitiate in England. She engaged in apostolic work in Ireland and pilgrimages connected to Marie Madeleine's story in France. Then a 30-day retreat to prepare for her first commitment at Stella Maris, Broadstairs, on 16 September 1979. Returning to Australia, Shirley made her final profession at Genazzano, Kew, on 12 September 1982.

Shirley's empathy and wisdom ensured her talents were greatly valued.

Shirley's empathy and wisdom ensured her talents were greatly valued by the Society. In 1981 she was appointed Principal of St Jude's School in Langwarrin, while in 1983 she was appointed Principal of St Ignatius' School, Richmond. In 1994 she was missioned to St Mary's in Broome where she tutored Aboriginal children and assisted the St Vincent de Paul Organisation. Shirley returned to Melbourne in 1966 to lead the Richmond Vaucluse Community and the Frankston Community. Shirley's managerial and interpersonal skills were evident in these roles and in 1999 she was appointed as Provincial Bursar. This complex, responsible position also extended to the new province of Asia. Seven years later she assisted Sr Maureen Martin fcj in the 2006 handover. Shirley's most recent appointment was to Shepparton for the past six years.

During 2017 Shirley felt her strength failing and requested assessment for a nursing home. She was delighted to be admitted to St Catherine's in Balwyn on 28 November 2017, where she now resides. Shirley celebrates her 91st birthday this October and reflects on her religious journey as one of happiness and fulfilment. We congratulate Shirley on her 40-year Jubilee and offer thanks and blessings for her contribution to the FCJ Society and the people it serves. If life is a gift from God, Shirley has offered her thanks for that gift in full measure.



Dear readers

I am just home from Canada where the FCJ Chapter was held. It was an enriching experience.

I enclose the Press Release giving you the names of new members of the FCJ General Council. Next year we are celebrating the Bi-Centenary of the life of the FCJ Society. More news of that to come in 2020.

Barbara Brown-Graham fcj

The Magnificent Seven continued

Rev Dr Brendan Reed PP, college chaplain and good friend to the FCJ Society, and Right Rev Dom Davis Tomlins OCSO were Jubilee celebrants. FCJs, family, friends, former and current students, staff and Companions in Mission crowded into the chapel to honour the 'Magnificent Seven', a title denoted by Fr Brendan which raised a gentle laugh in the congregation.

Jubilarians renewed their vows during Mass, this devoted life commitment, according to the Society Constitutions. They recited Prayers of the Faithful asking for blessings on Pope Francis and Sr Claire Sykes, General Superior of the Society, as well as compassion for the needy and those living in war and violence, and asked for help to be protectors for the created masterpiece that is the world around us.

After the Eucharist, a delicious tea was served and the jubilee cake was cut. Connections were made between people who count the FCJs as part of their lives. Love was in the air. How grateful we are that these women took vows all those years ago. They stand as models of fidelity and grace, women after Marie Madeleine's own heart. The Jubilee celebration was a public recognition of the offering of self each Sister made. And for that we are blessed.





A PILGRIMAGE:

In Marie Madeleine's footsteps

PILGRIMAGE: a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith: the place of birth or death of founders or saints, or to the place of their 'calling' or spiritual awakening ... devotees are encouraged to visit for their spiritual benefit: to be healed or have questions answered or to achieve another spiritual benefit.

And so it was for 24 pilgrims and four Sisters fcJ departing on a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, on 29 June this year. The diverse group hailing from England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Indonesia and Myanmar was led by wonderful Sisters Cornelia, Anouska, Mary and Lorenza – representative of a worldwide mission that includes Romania, England, Ireland and Italy.

We met at Gare du Nord in Paris in the midst of an extraordinary heatwave sweeping Europe. I was fortunate to be included in the group of six staff from Genazzano FCJ College, Kew, in Melbourne. Our pilgrimage was to take us to places of importance in Marie Madeleine's life story. It would inevitably lead us deeper in our understanding of what it means to be a faithful companion of Jesus.

Our journey was often challenging and initially seemed out of sequence. Marie Madeleine was born in Châteauroux but we travelled from Paris to Amiens. This is where her son Eugene began his education at the Jesuit school at St Acheul. Pilgrims walked to Marie Madeleine's little house at 11 Rue Dupuis. A place of beginnings. She lived there and had deep mystical experiences in the oratory. We prayed with her – after all, we walked in her footsteps. Marie

Madeleine's spirit lingered and invited us to become part of her story. We agreed and entered the journey with open hearts.

Amiens was the perfect place to begin: the place of her conversion and surrender.

Not my will but yours be done.

The Jesuit Fathers were instrumental in Marie Madeleine's spiritual journey, directing her in prayer retreats and spiritual direction. Ignatian prayer enabled Marie Madeleine to grow in discernment, which proved to be her unique spiritual gift and also her most fervent prayer:

To know the will of God and have the courage to do it.

Through Ignatian prayer and direction God's plan began to reveal itself. The tangible struggle of her will conforming to God's desire for her life was felt in the Chapel at St Acheul. As the pilgrims touched the little window, we imagined

Pictured left: The De Bengy family.

the solitary woman sitting there, watching the boys at prayer. Questions were asked: how could she leave her only child, her connection to her husband, their dreams, their love for each other? It seemed God was asking too much – to surrender everything – her attachment to a conventional life existing of a husband, more children, social status, comfort and security. She loved Jesus but that love was to be tested.

Do you love me more than these, Simon?

We journeyed to Albert and stood in front of the tabernacle. Marie Madeleine heard Jesus say,

Ask what you will

and she responded with the words,

I only desire the accomplishment of your holy will.

The pilgrims reflected on the question of how we respond? Confusion, fear, love. Do we have the courage of Marie Madeleine? What does Jesus want us to do?

Give me the grace to accomplish it faithfully, as soon as it is made known to me. With fidelity and joy.

And the gift of gentleness, which Marie Madeleine needed to ask for. It reassured me that God works with our personalities and circumstances, using all for good.

Châteauroux, the birthplace of Marie Madeleine and the place of her baptism, invited the pilgrims to reflect on our own inclusion or adoption into God's family circle, by grace and love as St Paul describes it. Baptism is the sacrament of belonging, Marie Madeleine renewed her baptismal vows every year.

The theme of family took on its own dynamic. Family greeted us at Bourges Cathedral with the seventh generation of the de Bengy family celebrating Eucharist with the pilgrims. Our shyness and lack of communication skills seemed irrelevant as we were united in the Eucharist, drawn together by the story of an ancestor we felt deeply connected to. Whose spirit continued to inform our lives and motivations.

Family, welcome and inclusion were deepened at Parassy, Marie Madeleine's home and the house she received from her father as a wedding dowry. It was a verdant scene; we walked through old vineyards, hearing the stories and learning about the local traditions, arriving at the house early in the afternoon. Jane, the current owner, welcomed our hot and thirsty group with a



A Pilgrimage continued

refreshing table laden with food and drinks for afternoon tea. Hospitality, generosity. This gracious stranger and newcomer to Marie Madeleine's story delighted in her visitors, opening the house and surrounds to our inquisitive eyes and questions. Jane was immersed in the story and had become part of the family too, drawn to search for details and history about the property, wanting to know more about the remarkable woman who loved this home 200 years ago.

We experienced a shift that afternoon. We bonded as family. Laughing, talking and reflecting on the experience at the only pub in Parassy, the Mayor joining and sharing the *bon vivant* ambiance of this unusual little group. The thirst to belong, to be part of something meaningful and greater than ourselves, a sense of companionship, were a lived experience and shared with others now.

The final days in Paris held the promise of being home and going home for the pilgrims. We visited the convent in Paris, stood in Marie Madeleine's bedroom, saw the cross, the images of a woman and her life, but she wasn't there. We had walked in the footsteps of an incredibly passionate, loving woman who listened, discerned and ultimately did God's will. I had grown to love the woman, Marie Madeleine. She had become a role model for living one's desire in conformity with God's desire for our life. Her challenges were great and continued in Paris; tears, testing and the complete surrender of her will. I felt her loneliness but she was able to go against it; *contra agere*, strengthened through companionship with Jesus, in whom she found the companion her heart and entire body longed for.

The pilgrims sang their final rendition of *Companions on a Journey*. The story continues, broken open, shared with others, companions in God's story, **family**.

Helena Goldsmith

What can a 'drop in the ocean' do for people who have such great needs?

When I applied to be a part of the Genazzano FCJ College Timor Leste Immersion Team in 2019, I was curious to find out what our gifts and monetary support could do for the children and the communities I was about to meet.

I had prepared myself with a brush-up on the history of the war with Indonesia and the secession of Timor Leste. The secession decision was based primarily on the belief that together with Australia the Timorese would co-develop the reserves of natural gas and oil in the Sunda Strait and use their share of the revenue to rebuild their lives and develop their fledgling independent nation. Most essential infrastructure and buildings in Dili, the capital, and many regional towns and villages had been destroyed during the conflict. One third of the population had also died as a result of the war. The need to rebuild, repair and replace the most basic facilities and infrastructure is still required 25 years later!

Over the past nine years the families of the students who visit Timor Leste have provided financial support for students and have helped to build four classrooms at one school. Future plans are underway to build a toilet block in the school grounds over the next 12 months. Many material donations of clothes, education items, health items and sporting goods were donated. This totalled 450 kilograms. No problem at the airport when we were overweight! A parent came forward with an 'open wallet' and offered to pay the extra. The other parents quickly did the sums and pitched in to share the cost.

When I arrived in Timor Leste I found a friendly, warm and trusting people who have little in the way of possessions, food and clean water.

The families we met were so appreciative of the gifts we gave them and passed on their sincere thanks to us via Fr Rui, our pastoral leader and translator during our stay. What touched me deeply was the gratitude and humility of the families, teachers and religious everywhere we went.

We were amazed at the huge effort made by the village women, who prepared morning or afternoon tea for us. The money to purchase the ingredients was given to the women by Fr Rui and the women then organised the cooking and carried it in baskets to the school for us. It was customary for them not to eat with us, but to distribute the leftover food amongst the families in the village.

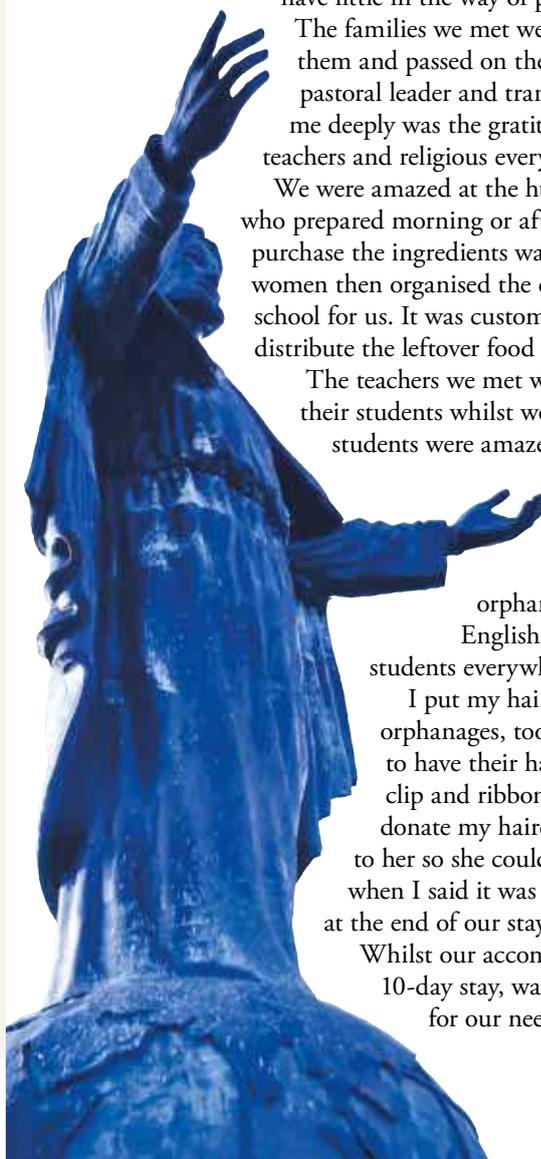
The teachers we met were so committed to the future of their students whilst working with very basic resources. Our students were amazed at the enthusiasm of students when

they received a small pencil case with a few items inside. The sporting goods we distributed to the school children and to the children at the orphanages were like manna from heaven.

English conversations were highly valued by the students everywhere we went.

I put my hairdressing skills to good use at one of the orphanages, too, and had excited young girls lining up to have their hair trimmed and braided with a new clip and ribbon. The nun in charge asked me if I could donate my hairdressing kit with scissors and combs etc. to her so she could cut the girls hair. She was delighted when I said it was my intention all along to give it to her at the end of our stay.

Whilst our accommodation in Laga, our base for the 10-day stay, was basic, it was more than adequate for our needs. At night, we had refreshing cold





showers using a small bucket, which we filled from a large container of water filled from a bore. There was no air-conditioning or running water, hot or cold, and when the electricity cut out we used candles.

Fr Rui, a Salesian priest, ensured we didn't waste a minute and often suggested a short trip or walk to an interesting place. One such place was an indigenous village where three to four families lived communally and built their own thatched huts. It was interesting to see how authentic their lifestyle has remained, including their use of traditional earthenware cooking utensils and their wearing of traditional dress. We also visited a salt lake where sea salt was harvested and sold through a small local commercial outlet. We were also taken to some caves used to store ammunition during the War of Independence and later also used to safely harbour some Australian soldiers from the Indonesian Army, thanks to some Timorese youths who knew about the caves.

‘The work of the religious in providing the ‘mortar’ for the communities they serve is of great value to the villagers and the schools they ran or supported.’

There were so many highlights, but I would like to note how our students rose to the occasion and lived like the locals for the duration of our stay. There was not one complaint from any of them about the heat or humidity or the long bumpy and dusty road trips or the absence of running or hot water. They understood their role and the purpose of the immersion and how their small contribution of gifts and physical presence could make such a difference to the children they connected with – and connected they certainly became, through song, dance, laughter, language and prayer.

The success of this trip was due to the meticulous organisation by Tiziana Dodds, who ensured we collected and bagged as much as possible to make the most positive impact during our stay. Patrick Linehan was the third teacher to accompany the group and without his help heaving large bags, splitting at the seams with donations, on top of our ‘troopies’, we would have struggled to load and unload our baggage. His knowledge of the history of Timor often put a clearer perspective on the places we visited.

I would like to mention the religious aspects of our immersion in Timor Leste. For me, it was a very positive and faith-enriching experience and one which allowed me to share in the devotion the Timorese had to their faith. I believe the students were impressed with this deep level of devotion their fellow students demonstrated during Masses and prayer sessions.

At 6.00 am each morning the roosters began crowing very loudly in our small village,

then the church bells would ring inside our convent compound. The young secondary students were ready for their school day and older village residents would pour into the churchyard and into the small but beautiful church for morning Mass. The singing was beautiful and the reverence of the congregation was enviable. It is obvious that the community draws great hope and consolation from their faith and I can say it was inspiring to be there and share in the Eucharist with them. I attended a rosary prayer session and the prayers were recited out loud in a beautiful and rhythmic manner which was almost meditative.

The work of the religious in providing the ‘mortar’ for the communities they serve is of great value to the villagers and the schools they ran or supported. I was reminded on many occasions of the similar work of the FCJs in The Philippines and other needy areas in the Asia-Pacific region where, apart from our geographic proximity, we also have a Christian obligation to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need.

Rosa Solowiej

Pictured above: Gen girls lead the singing.



Tending the gardens at Genazzano

There is a long tradition of gardeners at Genazzano, tending the wonderful gardens that those of us who study or work or live there are fortunate to enjoy. When the new convent was built in 1891, it was built on the property of 'Woodlands', which was described as a 'shady park'. The nuns laid out the grounds and planted a variety of trees, 'under the watchful eye of Mother Stanislaus Stock'. The neighbours gave the nuns gifts of plants and trees which form the basis of the gardens as we know them today. When the catastrophic bank failure of the early 1890s occurred, the nuns lost all their money, and they relied on the goods they could produce from their own cows, hens, their orchard and their vegetable garden.

Kym Esme has worked in the gardens at Genazzano for 16 years. In this time, she thinks two most evident qualities of the community are stewardship and companionship. Kym moved to Australia from New Zealand in 1998, and the environment and natural world is a place in which she has always found safety and comfort. Kym says when you work out of doors you experience the intimacy of seasons and connection to the earth. She believes strongly she is one of a long line of gardeners who are caretakers of this land and it is important to her to play a part in use and stewardship of the College gardens, handing them on to those who come after her.

When she came to Australia Kym firstly volunteered at CERES Permaculture and Bush Food Nursery and she was encouraged there to pursue her interest in gardens. She enrolled at Northern Melbourne TAFE and completed a Certificate Course in Horticultural Operations, which she followed with a three-year certificate course at Burnley Horticultural College in Horticulture, Parks and Gardens. When Kym was first employed at Genazzano, then Principal, Mrs Patricia Cowling, encouraged her to finish her study in this area.

Genazzano garden quickly became a place of healing and comfort for her. She speaks of the dominance of the Wardell

architecture and the way the gardens reveal the building's beauty. The slope of the land allowed William Wardell, the architect, to site the building back into the hill. She feels a strong sense that the land holds the memories of the past inhabitants of the College and the neighbourhood which surrounds it. While there have been many changes to the gardens, responding to the changes in the school, some of the trees are very old and she notes the cedars in front of the College and the oak tree behind when the College was established.

Working in a school means that she feels the lively energy of the place. She hears the students' music as she works near the building and observes the sport on the oval and helps when the Biology classes are outside examining the trees and plants of the College environment.

Working at Genazzano, Kym met the FCJ nuns for the first time and she remembers especially the friendship of Sr Dolores Kirby and Sr Mary Rose Dennehy. She enjoyed her talks with them and commented on their intelligence and the sense of companionship she experienced with them. Kym loves the companionship of many of the staff and is grateful for the friendship she has enjoyed and the care of the community. Working in a school she is conscious of the value of being part of the team of the staff, and especially the outdoor staff with whom she works most closely.

Kym's work at Genazzano means she is part of an FCJ tradition. Beauty of nature was important to Marie Madeleine D'Houët. At her marriage in 1804 she was given as a dowry a property at Parassy near Bourges in central France. Surrounded by vineyards and wheat fields, it became for her a place of solitude, growth in holiness and happiness. She went there annually for the grape harvest and knew the people of the village well. In 2009 a year of celebrations honoured Marie Madeleine, a woman of the land, and many events were earth-focused. Gardens were beautified, seedlings of nutritious plants tended, shading trees planted and orchards extended. Marie Madeleine believed in the importance of stewardship of the land and, in today's language, was environmentally aware.

Marie Madeleine's connection to the land is one that Kym shares and she feels grateful to be part of the tradition of tending the beautiful grounds of Genazzano.

Anne McIlroy

If the modern world of burgeoning cities and thronging crowds assaults your senses, imagine exploring a landscape that is 1.8 billion years old and was once a part of the Arctic. It may sound like fantasy, but with the movement of tectonic plates and their thrust and displacement over millions of years, such a primordial wonder is surprisingly not in the northern hemisphere. This marvel of our geological and sacred past is here, on our very doorstep. Such a wonder is recognised more by myth than knowledge, but is commonly identified as the Kimberley, in northern WA.

Most modern explorers come to appreciate the diversity of this rugged landscape from four-wheel land cruisers. Suitably provisioned against famine, their occupants tackle the pindan tracks and sapping heat to immerse themselves in our timeless land. However, an even more inspiring journey can be enjoyed from an ocean perspective. Small passenger cruisers with a shallow draft can slowly wend their way from Darwin to Broome, offering passengers close-up encounters with previously inaccessible wonders of this unknown coastline. Anchored offshore, passengers can transfer to tenders or zodiacs to journey through the turquoise waters between towering red sand stone gorges that have been eroded over millions of years. The mighty King George Falls are at the head of such spectacular cliffs where water thunders in torrents throughout most of the year.

A journey to Swift Bay reveals Aboriginal middens which indicate Indigenous occupation for many thousands of years. Also seen here are amazing galleries of art, some 8000 years old, of the Gwion Gwion and Wandjina styles. The mind marvels at the enduring representations of ducks and kangaroos, and handprints of people whose memory only exists in the Dreamtime.

At Regent River and Prince Frederick Harbour, a beach landing on Zodiacs enables a trek to amazing natural springs, surrounded by small white ghost gums, with crystal-clear water supporting purple water lilies. Mirror reflections capture the kaleidoscopic colours of the red sandstone, the green grasses and a cobalt sky. This oasis in a rocky and seemingly barren landscape echoes with bird calls and the steady thrum of insects. Another similar excursion transports the traveller to Langgi Island, where Isobel, the last of the traditional owners, shares the legend of the



King George Falls, Mitchell Plateau, Kimberley region, Western Australia.

Photo: Peter James McNally Wikimedia CC

numerous stalactite rocks and the platforms they support, which was where the Wandjina people once practised a kind of sky burial.

Nature's displays are just as spellbinding. With the 12-metre tidal falls of the region, unique natural phenomena transform the landscape. Two gaps in the McLarty Ranges, which cut through the Pentecost Sandstone, have been widened sufficiently to force water into the basins like flooded valleys. When the tides rise and fall, a horizontal waterfall is formed as the great flood of water trapped behind the gaps rushes in and out of Talbot Bay. The speed and volume of water are stupendous and provide a thundering, thrilling ride in the Zodiacs through the narrow gaps.

Indigenous Australians once lived in harmony within their land

Another marvel is witnessed at Montgomery Reef. Twice a day as the tide recedes, Montgomery Reef emerges from the sea like two parallel mountain ranges. Cruising down what is akin to a veritable channel, one is assailed by thousands of waterfalls cascading into the waterway, while herons and oystercatchers patrol the emerging reef, picking off an easy meal. On the eastern edge of Montgomery Reef there are little specks of land called High Cliff Islands. For over a hundred years they have been a source of intrigue and mystery, for this was once the home of the Yawijibay people, who lived there for almost 7000 years. They were big and strong, some as tall as seven feet. In 1929 they vanished, and only recently it has come to light that they possibly died from the effects of the flu, brought by white travellers.

Sadly, the Aboriginal people who occupied

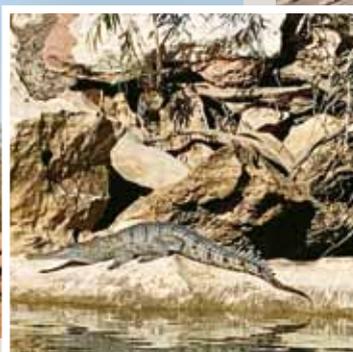
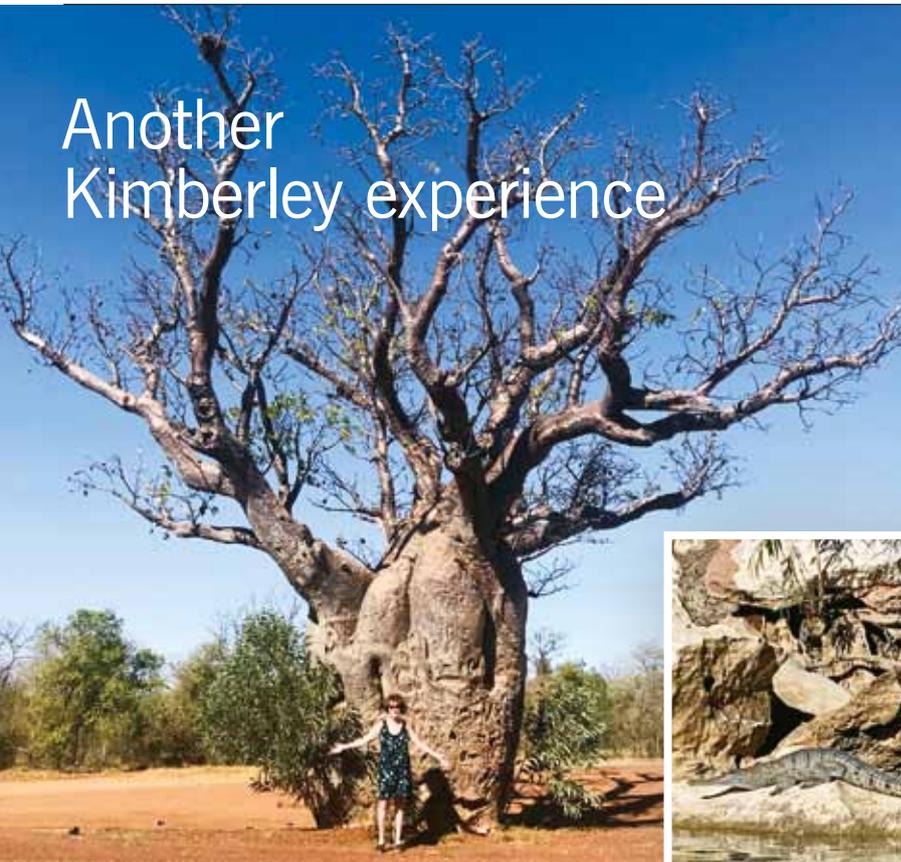
the Kimberley for nearly 40,000 years are but few in their native country. During World War II, government policy decreed that all Indigenous people be removed from their land in the Kimberley. It was felt that they were a threat to national security as they had the potential to direct any Japanese invaders to white settlements. Tragically, they were rounded up and resettled in unfamiliar territory, with other Indigenous people who were strangers to their clans and moieties. What a wonderful world these first peoples inhabited. How clever and resourceful they were to live harmoniously in this harsh but magnificent environment, knowing the difference between sustainability and plunder. Their Dreamtime saw them as a part of a cycle, where they came from the land, which nurtured them, until their return to it.

European occupation of Australia, with populations that pullulate seaboards with their multi-storey skyscrapers and suburban sprawl, stain the landscape with monstrous temples to modern technology. They reflect engineering genius that relegates original river beds, natural contours and flora and fauna to vague memory in a little over 200 years. Knowing the cost of everything, but value of nothing, development has become synonymous with progress.

Yet, a visit to the Kimberley reminds us that Indigenous Australians once lived in harmony within their land. The simple legacies of their existence are humble reminders of a spiritual understanding of their country, which nourished the present without a cost to the future. Living now in the age of the Anthropocene, where our footprint threatens the survival of the blue planet, what a tragedy that we have learned so little from them.

Carol Rosenhain

Another Kimberley experience



I recently visited the red dust of the Kimberley, an amazing experience on many levels. It was a unique opportunity to gain an insight into and a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and story.

I was part of the Genazzano Kimberley Exchange program, a scholarship program offered to four Year 10 students to immerse them in Aboriginal schools and communities. Together with Mrs Marea Lanki, who has coordinated the Program for 11 years and knows the region intimately, we covered this beautiful part of the world over three weeks in our 4WD vehicle.

During this time we experienced both remote and coastal Aboriginal communities: Warmun near Turkey Creek and Bidydanga, two hours drive south of Broome. We lived in these communities and experienced first-hand the many issues they are experiencing. We heard and witnessed how they try to tackle school attendance, engagement in class, health problems and family involvement. We learnt about the high rate of teen suicide and about 'sorry business', the cultural practices and protocols associated with a death. We met amazing, tireless energetic people.

We stayed in Warmun, a closed community at Turkey Creek. The girls worked in the only school there, Ngalangangpum, a Catholic school started by the Josephite nuns. Sisters Julianne and Theresa are still a huge presence in the community. They have boundless and seemingly tireless energy and their love for their work is evident in all they do. The students live close to the school but are collected daily by the school bus to encourage attendance. Breakfasts and all meals are offered to the students. For some students their last meal at school is often their final meal for the day. Daily school attendance rates vary wildly; the school often operates on about 50 per cent attendance.

Pictured above: Boab tree, is a native to Queensland.
 Right: Sue fishing for her supper.
 Centre: A crocodile sneaking forward.

The children pray to their God, 'Narbon'. I was interested to see how Catholicism melds with Aboriginal spirituality, which has such a deep connection to Earth, with their Dreamtime and their understanding of the world, of its creation, and its stories. I was pleased to see that the Aboriginal beliefs and stories are respected and incorporated into Catholicity – something that, historically and universally, missionaries in their zeal to convert perhaps failed to do in the past. I was surprised to hear the Angelus was prayed daily by the children; it took me back to my childhood in the '60s. This is apparently a directive from the Bishop for all Western Australian Catholic schools.

... Aboriginal spirituality, which has such a deep connection to Earth, with their Dreamtime and their understanding of the world, of its creation, and its stories.

We headed south through Halls Creek and stayed at Fitzroy Crossing on our way to Broome. There we had a cruise on the Fitzroy River through the magnificent Geikie Gorge and watched crocodiles slide sneakily and effortlessly into the water. It was breathtaking. I was reminded of Dorothea Mackellar's 'her beauty and her terror, the wide brown land for me'.

While in Broome we visited both BRAMS, an organisation of Aboriginal People, for Aboriginal

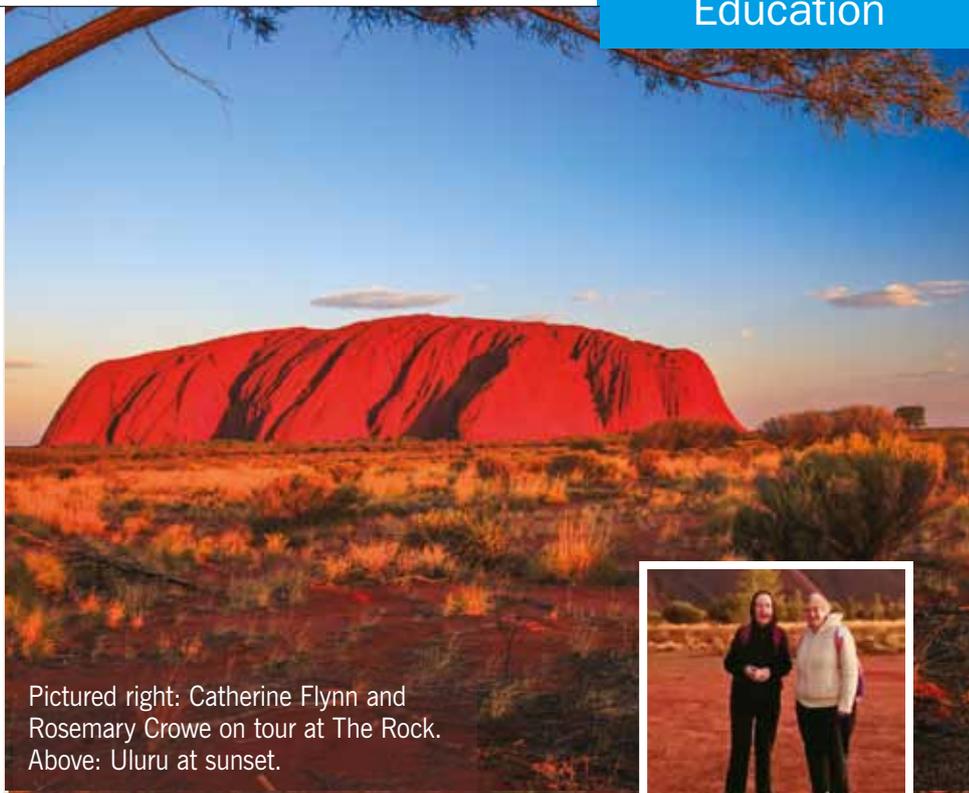
People, controlled by Aboriginal People; and the dialysis centre. It was disturbing to hear of the high rates of rheumatic fever, diabetes, kidney failure, skin diseases and other illnesses affecting the Aboriginal population. At The Kimberley Stolen Generation Centre we met with women elders who were taken as children. Their message to us was, 'Don't feel sorry for us, but come and learn about us and our story'. We also visited the Heritage Centre and met Sister Pat and learnt about the work of the St John of God Sisters in the Kimberley.

↳ ... come and learn about us and our story. 7

One hot, dusty day, after being knocked around on very rough roads and testing our 4WD skills, we arrived at Beagle Bay, a closed Aboriginal community two hours north of Broome. There we happened upon John, who generously shared his story. John is an elder who was stolen from his family in Halls Creek as a three-year-old and taken to Beagle Bay. Along with many other children there, he was raised by the nuns and priests. Interestingly, John had nothing but praise for the nuns and priests who raised him and is very grateful to them. He said they provided him with the skills and education to allow him to travel and cope in life. He didn't mention his family. His message to the girls was strong in delivery. 'Get an education. If you have an education, it does not matter what colour, creed or nationality you are.'

The trip was an eye-opener and an amazing, humbling, spiritual experience for me. As I drove through the country and walked on red earth I felt a deeper connection to the land and I gained a sense of what it must mean to our Indigenous Australians. I saw goodness, generosity, rugged beauty. I gained a better understanding of our history. I understand better how first Australians want and need a voice to be listened to ... through a process of truth. We need to work together for a shared future.

Sue McNamara



Pictured right: Catherine Flynn and Rosemary Crowe on tour at The Rock. Above: Uluru at sunset.

Photo: Murray Foubister Wikimedia CC

A Spiritual journey

On the feast of St Ignatius on 31 July 2019, Sisters Catherine Flynn and Rosemary Crowe fcJ flew out of Tullamarine airport to Connellan airport, Alice Springs – then to be taken on a short bus trip to the 'Sails in the Desert' resort close to the village of Yulara.

After finding our rooms and taking a first rest we walked to the nearby village to find that it was mostly souvenir shops and restaurants, plus one or two opportunities to witness local people painting and producing other cultural souvenirs. It was here that we decided to have our evening meal.

The following day Catherine and I rose early at 5.00 am to be in time to join others who were interested in experiencing the pre-dawn tranquillity and see the sun rise over our 'mecca' – the purpose of our visit to central Australia. After the sun had risen, we were taken on a guided walk to various points of interest around Uluru. We went into caves and crannies where Mica, our excellent guide, explained in detail the geology, flora, fauna and rock paintings to be found in the area.

The last part to this outing was to be driven around the base of this holy ground and shown areas that are sacred to our Indigenous First Nation people. When one leaves the hustle and bustle of the resorts it is a wondrous thing to experience the quiet and peace as one enters the Uluru and Kata Tjuta National Park. The Park consists of 327,414 acres and the Aboriginal people are the custodians.

The evening of our first day saw us out again in the shadow of this iconic Rock to view the Fields of Light, a man-made phenomenon which has become a tourist attraction.

Another highlight of our visit was to view Uluru at sunset and then proceed to enjoy a three-course meal seated under the stars. The stars were like diamonds on black velvet. On hand was an astronomer who used a laser beam to point out significant stars and related to us the Indigenous story associated with each star.

We did not climb Uluru or walk around it as many tourists do but chose to take a helicopter flight. This gave us magnificent views of this monolith and Kata Tjuta, which made us feel that we had missed nothing. I was impressed and pleased to observe that all the tour guides were very respectful of the Aboriginal culture and heritage associated with this sacred site.

For me it fulfilled a longed-for opportunity to visit what I call 'The Spiritual Centre of Australia'.

Rosemary Crowe fcJ

Concert performance

On 26 May The Friends of Romania and The Philippines held a concert to raise money for the Sr Margaret Mary Kennedy fcJ Boarding Bursary. It was held in the Madeleine Centre for Music and the Performing Arts, at Genazzano FCJ College. Past students of the College and friends and supporters of the FCJ Sisters' work in Asia and Romania donated their time and their talents to put on a very enjoyable concert.

One of those who appeared was Prue Spencer, a Year 10 student. Prue is a magician. She has a wonderful stage presence and she delighted the audience with her magic and her personality. Magic is an unusual interest, or at least unusual for a 16-year-old girl, but Prue is very accomplished and a prize-winning magician.

Prue says, like many small children, she was fascinated when her father played a disappearing thumb trick on her, but, unlike others, her interest remained and grew, and at the age of 12, Prue entered the Australian Junior Magic Championships, and came second, without any training and very little experience! A passion was born! In 2017 Prue entered the Australian Junior Championship of Close Up and Stage Magic and won all categories. She says her friends have always been interested and supportive of her interest in this field and come to her shows and cheer her on.

↳ ...like many small children, she was fascinated when her father played a disappearing thumb trick on her, but, unlike others, her interest remained and grew, and at the age of 12, Prue entered the Australian Junior Magic Championships. ▸

Pictured above: Prudence Spencer in her remarkable act as the 'Magician Extraordinaire'.

When Prue attended the New Zealand Magic Convention in 2017, she was surprised to find that so many of the convention attendees were older white men, and she said that her performance drew some surprise. This was a valuable experience, especially because it helped her grow in determination to succeed in this mainly male field. She was the only entrant in the Junior competition, and she won this, but then it was announced that the judges' notes revealed that her score was higher than those of the adults who had competed in the adult competition. Prue is a trailblazer for girls who have an interest in magic.



Prue explains to me that training for magic is mostly a solitary pursuit. When I asked her how she did it she said, 'You read the books, watch YouTube videos and train yourself'. However, her growing interest and success have meant that more recently, Prue has begun to train with a coach, Dom Chambers. Her coach has a great deal of experience and has been a contestant on important talent shows like *America's Got Talent* and *Penn & Teller*. Prue and Dom work on routines and the

sleight-of-hand tricks and they rehearse 'until they have got it perfect'. While it is a solitary interest, Prue has made friends with other junior magicians. She met two other girl magicians in 2015, and out of this friendship, they decided to put on their own show. They performed at the Spiegel tent in Collingwood in July this year.



Prue tells me that magic is a field that is dominated by men – for every 100 male magicians there is only one female magician – and so her interest and participation are helping to pave the way for other young girls who may have an interest in this area. Prue's interest is unusual as women usually begin in this field when they are older. Melbourne comedian Judith Lucy commented on this and she has been outspoken in her support for young women doing magic.

We wish Prue well in all her endeavours in the future.

Ann Rennie

Sr Margaret Mary fcJ Boarding Bursary Concert

A variety concert including vocal and instrumental items plus a magician.

Given Sr Margaret Mary Kennedy's belief in equal opportunity for all young women, it is not surprising that she actively supported the establishment of a Genazzano Boarding House to accommodate remote students. Her initiative has proved a success beyond all measure, with current and past boarders reflecting on how the experience has enriched their lives.

In order to offer the Genazzano experience to a student with limited opportunities and boundless talents, a boarding bursary is to be established in her honour. In support of this, the indefatigable Julie Chamberlin was the prime mover in organising a fundraising concert in the Madeleine Centre on Sunday afternoon 26 May.



↳ ... the depth and richness of the school's musical education was reflected in the outstanding quality and range of performances. ▸

Pictured above: Bianca DiMattina's dance performance at the concert.

Ms Janet Dawson, Director of Music at Genazzano, invited and assembled a diverse and talented selection of current and past students to present a stunning and inspiring program. Her choice was flawless, for the depth and richness of the school's musical education was reflected in the outstanding quality and range of performances. Opening with 'For Good,' from *Wicked*, a lively quartet comprising Isabel Rattray, Madeleine Ryan, Mia Guglielmi and Aimee Forrest immediately had the audience spellbound with their harmony and energy.

This was followed by lively duos from Angela and Madeleine Ryan and solos by Maya Courtney, Bianca DiMattina and Genevieve Kuner. The Genazzano Senior Chamber Choir presented a polished performance of 'In the Stillness of the Night,' reassuring everyone that choral music continues to thrive at Genazzano.

Raphael Wong, a past Xavier student, brought both passion to his solo from *Les Miserables*, and harmony to his duet with Tiffany Goring in singing 'The Prayer'. Additionally, Savannah and Claudia Kuner demonstrated their instrumental mastery with a wonderful Vivaldi Duo for Violin and Cello.

Brigid DeNeefe, a mature and experienced performer, thoroughly engaged us all in her vibrant and dramatic performance of 'The Girl in 14G'. This imbued the concert with much hilarity in contrast to some of the more reflective offerings. Another touch of variety was added by a very talented Prudence Spencer in her remarkable act as the 'Magician Extraordinaire'. Her clever patter and deft movements left the audience incredulous that one so young could master such sophisticated skills with maturity and aplomb.

The concert was enhanced by the

Bursary Concert continued

inimitable and much loved Mr Ian Harrison as Master of Ceremonies. His very personal introductions to each performer gave the audience some insight into the years of study and practice that each artist had undertaken in pursuit of their craft. Some have already made professional debuts, and it is hard not to imagine that others will soon follow a similar path.

At the conclusion of the concert, an elegant afternoon tea was enjoyed by all in the foyer. This was provided by The Friends of Romania and the Philippines Committee. It was greatly appreciated on a cold, windy day, as was the opportunity to catch up with familiar faces. Proceeds from the concert and raffles totalled \$7,500, which is a wonderful foundation upon which to build. Our thanks are extended to all for their support, including Ann Rennie behind the scenes, organising Emily and Charlotte Hand to present floral tributes to our volunteer performers, and the generosity of our accompanists Ms Alicia Bendall and Mr Jonathon Harvey.

Carol Rosenhain

Pictured above: Isabel Rattray, Madeleine Ryan, Mia Guglielmi and Aimee Forrest.

Centre: Tiffany Goring and her husband Raphael Wong receiving a floral tribute from Emily and Charlotte Hand.

Below left: Sr Helen Buckley fcJ as the Compere.

Below right: Genevieve Kuner performs on the saxophone.



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FCJ Missions

You will find enclosed a donation envelope.

Any contribution to the work of the FCJ Society's Missions is most welcome.

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