

FCJnews

in the Province of Asia-Australia

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IN THIS PANDEMIC YEAR AND
200 YEARS OF CELEBRATION,
THE FCJ SISTERS
JOIN THE WORLD
IN SONG AND HOPE.

'If we hold on together
I know our dreams will
never die
Dreams see us through
to forever
Where clouds roll by
For you and I'
Diana Ross



CELEBRATING
OUR FCJ
BICENTENARY YEAR
alongside COVID-19

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FAITHFUL
COMPANIONS
OF JESUS
CELEBRATE
200 YEARS

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'The glory
of God must
shine forth
through me'

P8



What a wonderful grace as we begin our third century as faithful companions of Jesus! Thank you for being a precious part of this journey. We will find the right time to celebrate together somewhere in the future! 🙏

Celebrating our FCJ Bicentenary Year alongside COVID-19

Arrangements for the FCJ Society Celebration of the Bicentenary of our foundation in 2020 have been years in the making and who would have thought that our celebrations would compete with COVID-19! But perhaps this is a real gift from God – the treasures of which may only be unravelled through the grace of courageous reflection over time.

Right now we are experiencing a period witnessing to unprecedented death and fear of death around us, of exclusion and isolation, of economic downturn and uncertainty that surely bring us into solidarity with the vast majority of people in our world and a sizeable group in our own country – the elderly and marginalised, those whose major concern is not so much whether they will catch the virus, but whether they will be able to eat tonight and have a roof over their heads in some cases.

Pope Francis has presented ‘a plan for the rising up again’ of humanity in the midst of a global crisis that has brought the world’s peoples and the economy to their knees. He reflects on the coronavirus pandemic in the light of the resurrection of Jesus after his death and burial in the tomb. It was the women waiting at Jesus’ tomb – those first faithful companions of Jesus – who asked; ‘Who will roll away the stone?’ (Mark 16: 3) These women did not allow themselves to be paralysed by anxiety and suffering; they found ways to overcome every obstacle – simply by being and accompanying.*

We are never alone; nor are those amazing medical workers, teachers, and those who provide our essential services, all of whom continue to work together and use the immeasurable resources of selfless love and creative imagination to ‘roll away the stone’. Now is the opportunity for us to reflect on the lessons learned in this time of pandemic: to live as companions in hope and love; to be ready to change our lifestyle so that the poverty of countless millions and the devastation of the environment can

be brought to an end; to be alive, peaceful, joyful and positive; to fine-tune our daily lives to the gospel values we have learned.

What a wonderful grace as we begin our third century as faithful companions of Jesus! Thank you for being a precious part of this journey. We will find the right time to celebrate together somewhere in the future!

This issue of *FCJ News* takes us back to those early beginnings in France and gives some glimpses into the apostolic fruitfulness of the FCJ Sisters in Australia over the years since our first arrival here in 1882. The establishment of the Province of Asia–Australia in 2002 widened our horizons into South-East Asia and Sr Sofi, our most recently professed FCJ Sister, shares something of her own life and story in the reflection on her vow ceremony in December 2019.

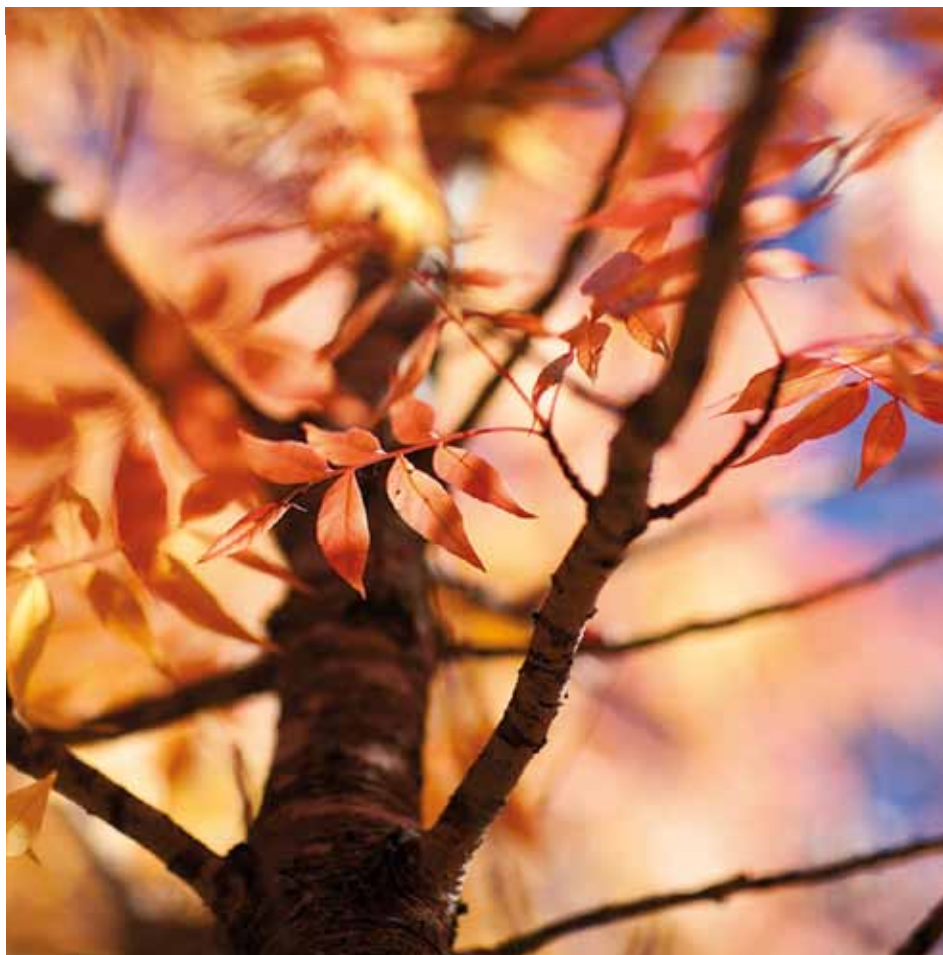
Enjoy the reading and be assured of our gratitude and prayerful accompaniment.

Barbara Brown-Graham fcj
Province Leader

*Pope Francis shared his plan exclusively with *Vida Nueva*, the Spanish religious weekly, published on 17 April 2020.

Pictured: Together with all FCJ schools around the globe, Genazzano celebrated the beginning of the FCJ Bicentenary by enjoying a Global Day of Kindness.

Autumnal walks to help us live out the pandemic



Sacha Fernandez via Flickr

Autumn and the falling leaves turn footpaths into slippery russet runways. Old gold and deep crimson become the shades of nature's palette. Life slows down to catch its breath. The pink blush of dawn, then dusk, when the air begins to nip as indigo evening steals in to watch the nightly news.

And during the day, we walk. And walk. And walk some more.

We begin to wear scarves and long pants and wrap ourselves up in layers. We are readying ourselves for being cooped up indoors, with more time for reverie and rumination, an adaptation that prioritises the interior. We are changing gear, discerning a different rhythm to our days. And right now, we acknowledge this strange new season of pause and tilt and slowdown and lockdown, with its harshness and hard edges, its anxiety and uncertainty.

The autumn light gives us pause for reflection.

In this forced hibernation and the very close 'bosoming' of family, many of us are taking the opportunity to walk like we've never walked before; purposefully striding so we raise the heart rate. We walk to think, clear the cobwebs, maintain fitness, see others out and about, shake the cabin fever, remind ourselves that the world can still offer solace. These are our small daily pilgrimages, for self and sanity and soul.

Suddenly, we have the sweet plenitude of time on our hands. I notice rainbow lorikeets nuzzling in my neighbour's banksia tree, chalked hopscotch on driveways, mounds of leaves raked briefly into corners, the late blooming, blowsy summer roses bowing to the inevitable, dogs of all shapes and sizes taking their owners for a walk.

Autumn, too, is the season for measured walks and slow perambulations; for mooching and meandering and mellowing; for noticing the changes in the air as leaves crackle under foot.

↳ ...we respond again to the offerings of the season: the glimmer of grey cloud, the last swathes of clear blue sky. ↩

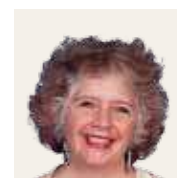
And now we see the slower stroll, the amble, the brisk gait, the zigzag of those scrolling, the family group with coffees in hand, all sorts of lively locomotion as we pass others on the footpath and maintain our distance. There are new, wry neighbourly smiles and glances. There is a complicity of understanding that creates community even with strangers.

As we get out and about, we respond again to the offerings of the season: the glimmer of grey cloud, the last swathes of clear blue sky, the sudden moody onslaught of rain. We weave its slower joys into the patchwork of our days.

And as we *walk on, walk on, with hope in our hearts*, we wait for the better days and

brighter seasons in our shared lives.

For we are not walking alone.



Ann Rennie

Pictured above: Autumn colour in New England NSW.

FCJ Christian Life Centre, Calgary, Canada 4–31 October 2019



Pictured above: Capitulars from around the world.

The theme for the 2019 General Chapter was:

Le Bon Dieu conduit tout lui-même.

God – Beauty, Truth, Goodness – is doing everything.

We have entered the bicentenary of our foundation (1820–2020) with gratitude and marvel at what God has accomplished in and through us, trusting in God's on-going strength and support.

A General Chapter is a key moment for each FCJ Sister as we take time to look at our individual lives and our life as a group across the world, so that we may be led by the Holy Spirit into the future.

The members of the General Chapter include our central leadership and the leaders and elected delegates of each of the Areas of the FCJ Society. However, in a very real way each FCJ contributes to the General Chapter by involving herself fully in the preparation for the Chapter and by her prayerful support both before and during the Chapter.

This Chapter took place in the FCJ Christian Life Centre in Calgary and it was wonderful to be in our own place meeting the Sisters in Canada who joined us for Mass each evening and at celebratory meals. In preparation, the delegates made a six-day retreat ably guided by Fr Peter Busson SJ. The retreat laid a wonderful foundation for the Chapter.

On 14 October Sr M Claire Sykes, General Superior, presented her report to the Chapter. This report is a detailed account of the Society's life over the previous six years. The report was received with enthusiasm and gratitude. In the afternoon of the same day the Financial Report, presented by General Bursar Sr Mary Fitzpatrick, was received with great appreciation. The following day the Capitulars (the members of the General Chapter) presented the reality of their four Areas –The Americas, Asia, Australia and Europe.

On 18 October we had a 'rest' day from Chapter business and went to Banff and Lake Louise for the day, where we revelled in the beauty of Western Canada in the snow! We returned to Calgary in the evening feeling refreshed and ready to continue our work.

On 22 October the Chapter elected Sr Bonnie Moser as General Superior. Bonnie is a Canadian – a woman of great faith, broad vision, hospitality and inclusivity. We look forward to Bonnie's leadership of the Society for the next six years. Two days later the General Assistants were elected: Srs Patricia Binchy, Ruth Casey and Judith Routier. We are **truly** blessed to have such a wonderful leadership team. Gratitude and love

were expressed to our outgoing Leadership group for six years: Srs M Claire Sykes, Barbara Brown-Graham, Patricia Binchy and Joanna Walsh.

During the weeks of the Chapter, the Capitulars worked through their focal topic, 'Matters of Greater Importance', to which all FCJs had contributed. Many hours were spent producing a document which will lead us into the future. Our hard work resulted in an inspiring document: *The Chapter Calls: Widening Our Circle of Love*. The richness of material submitted, enabled us to produce a life-giving document organised under the headings:

- Women of Hope and Energy and Compassionate Action
- Care for Our Common Home
- Governance in the Light of Our Present Reality
- Companions in Mission
- Vocation Ministry

Now to live it!

On 30 October we all engaged in a closing ritual where the Capitulars signed the Deliberations and an address from Sr Claire expressed the gratitude of the General Chapter to Sr Brenda Dolphin RSM for her facilitation and tireless commitment and encouragement during the Chapter and in the months of preparation. Claire declared the Chapter closed.

In the evening there was a social gathering where gratitude was expressed to the members of various committees and on 31 October, we all departed at various hours from early morning to late evening. *Le Bon Dieu conduit tout lui-même.*



Helen Buckley fcj



Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Hoüet



Faithful Companions of Jesus celebrate 200 years

This year we celebrate the bicentenary of the foundation of the Faithful Companions of Jesus and we celebrate the work of the Sisters extending over this period and throughout the world. Their mission is:

to be Companions of Jesus whose lives are dedicated to revealing Jesus to those around them.

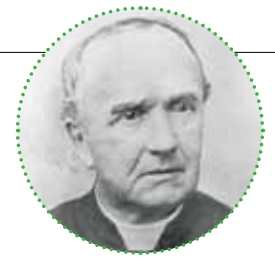
The order of the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ Sisters) was founded in Amiens in France in 1820 by Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Hoüet. Marie Madeleine lived at a time of social disruption and terror caused by the French Revolution. At this time, the Church was suppressed and many religious men and women were dispossessed and tyrannised. However, what followed this period of religious destruction was a spectacular growth: in particular, the mushrooming of communities of religious women, who were formed to meet the needs of those who were denied education, who were sick or hungry. The revival

of the religious congregations at this time was primarily a female phenomenon.

In France, Marie Madeleine was one of these women; just as was Sophie Barat, who founded the Society of the Sacred Heart, and Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in Ireland. These courageous women, reading the signs of the times, determinedly followed a call to serve those in need.

While praying in front of the crucifix at the convent

continued next page



Faithful Companions of Jesus celebrate 200 years continued

chapel of the Sacred Heart nuns in June 1817, Marie Madeleine heard the words, 'I thirst'. This was the moment when she understood what she should do for those who were suffering and were otherwise forgotten. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Marie Madeleine's motherhood and widowhood, perhaps, made her particularly sensitive to those who were in need of help, in her process of discerning what she should do.

She was inspired by the spirit of Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits she met in St Acheul, Amiens. She was influenced by the Ignatian ideal of 'total self-giving to the Lord'. Despite the initial resistance from the Jesuits, eventually it was agreed that Marie Madeleine should begin her work.

Inspiration to start her work

Amiens was a centre for the cloth trade, and Marie Madeleine became acutely aware of the social problems experienced by large numbers of people, who were seeking employment in local textile factories. The harsh deprivation and pressing human needs of those she saw around her provided the inspiration for her work. Women and children in particular suffered from hunger and exhaustion.

Present to this need, Marie Madeleine set up a school for the children who were working in local factories and contributing to the family income by unravelling the left-over cotton ends. Marie Madeleine and the sisters she gathered around her, who became known as the Faithful Companions of Jesus, saw also the hardship of the women who worked in these factories and offered classes at night for these women and recreation for these women and children.

Marie Madeleine's inspiration for her Society was Mary and the women of the gospel who ministered to Jesus and accompanied him to the foot of the cross. Her desire never wavered that this band of women be faithful companions of Jesus in deed and in

name. She wished for her Sisters to work in education, to provide retreats in their convents for lay people and to move beyond their homes and into foreign countries. The breadth of work and influence of the Sisters throughout the world is a testament to the power of this vision.

Foundation of the society

The Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus was founded on Holy Thursday night in 1820 as Marie Madeleine prayed before the Blessed Sacrament. In those early days a small group of women, inspired to follow her example, gathered with her to minister to the children most in need. The success of the work of the founding Sisters attracted the support of the local bishop, and he encouraged Marie Madeleine to establish further foundations. The growing reputation of the FCJ Sisters meant a number of bishops invited them into their dioceses,

to provide schooling and instruction in the faith for their people. Before her death in 1858, Marie Madeleine had succeeded in setting up a number of flourishing schools in different parts of France, and also in England and Ireland. Sometimes circumstances necessitated that she leave one foundation and move elsewhere for a more fruitful ministry.

FCJ communities were established in Switzerland and Italy in those places where she perceived the greater need. These foundations and schools were established in large part due to Marie Madeleine's energy and hard work as she travelled extensively.

After her death in 1858, FCJ communities were founded in Canada, Scotland, Belgium, the USA and Jersey. More recently communities have been established in Sierra Leone, Indonesia, the Philippines, Argentina, Bolivia, Romania, Mexico, Myanmar and Spain. The FCJ Sisters work in different ministries and share life in community.



Top: Fr J Dalton, 1870. Above: First arrival of twelve FCJ sisters in Australia in 1882.

FCJ Sisters in Australia

The FCJ Sisters came to Australia after the requests of Archbishop Goold and Fr Dalton SJ, the Jesuit Provincial, on behalf of Fr Mulhall SJ, the parish priest of Richmond (which then stretched as far as Lilydale and beyond). The Victorian Education Act of 1872 had mandated the secularisation of all Victorian schools and led to the end of government aid to all Catholic schools. The plight of Catholic schools was particularly dire at this time.

With the end of the government grant, religious sisters and brothers needed to teach and run the Catholic schools in the area. The Christian Brothers came in 1875, and twelve FCJ Sisters arrived in 1882. The Sisters took over the leadership of St Ignatius' Girls' School immediately upon their arrival and in just six years, the Richmond community numbered 34 Sisters. Alongside the parish school for girls, the Sisters established Mt St Joseph's Convent School (later to be known as Vaucluse College, Richmond) as a vibrant school for boarding and day students. An excellent education was provided by Vaucluse College, Richmond, until it closed its doors in 2000.

In response to the growing need for education of young women, Mother Mary John Daly, the Superior of the Sisters, purchased 'Woodlands', which was to be the site of the second FCJ College, Genazzano. In 1900 the Sisters arrived in Benalla, Victoria, to take over the parish school of St Joseph's and establish a school (St Mary of the Angels – now known as FCJ College). The welcome from Dean Davy, the parish priest of Benalla, paid tribute to the reputation for excellence in FCJ schools, noting 'the excellence of the education given in your schools in both England and France'.

A number of other schools were taken over or established by the FCJ Sisters in Victoria;

❖ Fr Brendan Reed noted the important contribution Genazzano FCJ College has made to Catholic education in Melbourne and paid particular tribute to the FCJ Sisters. ❖



Above: Genazzano FCJ Convent 1889.

- St Joseph's, Hawthorn;
- Sacred Heart, Kew;
- St John Berchman's, Camberwell (now Our Lady of Victories);
- St Mary's, Williamstown;
- St Stanislaus', Richmond South;
- St Brigid's Convent School, Healesville;
- Our Lady of Good Counsel School, Deepdene;
- Stella Maris Convent in Frankston (now known as John Paul College);
- St Anne's School, Seaford and
- St John's School, East Frankston.

In line with new ideas in parish and community, a frontier group at Langwarrin was formed to found St Jude's Primary School in January 1978 and to work building up the connections that form a parish.

This growth from the original group of 12 Sisters reveals the power and vitality of Marie Madeleine's vision and the courage and confidence of the Sisters who followed her.

This year in October, FCJ College, Benalla, will celebrate 120 years since its foundation. On 21 February 2019, the Genazzano FCJ College



Above: The house at Parassy.

community celebrated its 130th anniversary, with a Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral. The College Chaplain, Fr Brendan Reed, noted the important contribution Genazzano FCJ College has made to Catholic education in Melbourne and he paid particular tribute to the work of the FCJ Sisters. The Sisters' work, their courage and confidence, reflect the charism which



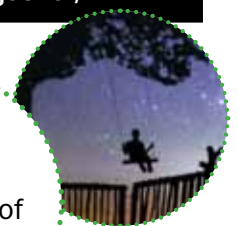
Marie Madeleine articulated in Amiens, in 1820.

Anne McIlroy



See the FCJ Sisters music video at: fcjsisters.org/news/if-we-hold-on-together/

FOR MORE about the Faithful Companions of Jesus go to: fcjsisters.org



‘The glory of God must shine forth through me’

(Breda O’Farrell fcJ)



It was in Senior High School when I was searching for God’s will in my life that he led me to know the FCJs. God gave me courage and confidence to begin my FCJ journey and this began in May 2014, the first time I came for a live-in with the FCJs. Formally, I started my Aspirancy in Baciro, Yogyakarta, in September 2014, which was followed by postulancy and then novitiate in Soropadan.

As I came to the end of my novitiate, I realised that I had grown so much since I came to the FCJs. I had grown in knowing God and following him through everything that had happened in my life. I had grown in personality, knowledge and spirituality. Finally, I felt ready to make my first vows. I wanted to be an FCJ Sister, be part of the body of the FCJ Society. Once I had been accepted for vows, I made my pre-vows retreat, and prepared readings and songs for my booklet. I chose the theme, ‘The glory of God must shine forth through me’, which is a quotation from Mother Breda O’Farrell fcJ that has greatly inspired me. Invitations were sent to friends, neighbours, CIM, my family and FCJ’s families nearby. I was so excited, full of spirit and had deep joy in my heart.

On Thursday 5 December 2019, I felt lifted up with happiness and excitement when I went to pick my family up from the airport. My father, mother and my older sister came from Sumatra to Java. My brother who is studying in



Pictured above: (from left to right) Clare Hand, Irene Wati, Afra Primadiana (Leader in Asia) and Sofi on the right.

Yogyakarta came to meet them too. Then the next day, on Friday evening, crowds gathered in Soropadan for my welcoming ceremony. One FCJ Sister from Myanmar, one from Ende, and our Area Leader, Afra fcJ from the Philippines, as well as my family, all the FCJ sisters in Yogyakarta and two young women interested in FCJ life united with me in the celebration. It was a prayerful and uplifting ceremony. My family and I were crying for joy and gratitude. Afra fcJ, on behalf of the Society, welcomed me to my new life as a professed FCJ Sister.

The actual vows ceremony took place the next morning, 7 December, in Sarasvita FCJ Center, Yogyakarta. Mass began at 10am celebrated by Fr Manuel SX, missionary of St Xavier. There was a beautiful choir offered from our BEC (Basic Ecclesial Community), which carried us joyfully from moment to moment. I made my vows in serenity and confidence. I felt deep peace and my heart was full of joy and love. Afra fcJ received my vows, and Clare fcJ and Irene fcJ were my witnesses. It was a beautiful and unforgettable moment in my life.

The celebration didn’t end there. Straight away that evening we gathered again in Soropadan house for my missioning. Afra fcJ read the missioning letter. I was missioned to study English literature in Yogyakarta for the new semester, beginning in August. Meanwhile I was missioned to Ireland until July. I felt my family were rightfully proud. Then they blessed me with a Batak* traditional ritual, in which they gave me a meal of golden fish with rice and a glass of pure water. I felt overwhelmed with love and blessings.

I am so grateful to God for all he has done for me. God is the one who calls me and has enabled me to continue following him until today. I believe he will always do this. I am ready for my mission to allow God’s glory to shine through me.

Sofiyanti Br Silaban fcJ

* Sofi’s family are Batak people who live in Northern Sumatra.



Photo: Tom Coolidge Genazzano AV

Genazzano farewells Julianne Barlow

“new students have been able to visit the Archives Room ... and gain an appreciation of the 130-year history of the well-loved school upon the hill.”

Farewell and thanks to a much-loved colleague at Genazzano for her long years of service and friendship to the Genazzano FCJ Community.

‘ This seems to me to be one of the absolutely quintessential things about the human condition. It’s what actually distinguishes man from any other animal: living with those who have lived and the companionship of those who are no longer alive. Not necessarily the people we knew personally, I mean the people perhaps whom one only knows by what they did, or what they left behind, this question of the company of the past... and archives ... are like an archaeological site.’

(John Berger, *Portraits: John Berger on Artists*, Verso, 2017)

In this day of digitisation and data analytics when the past can be compressed into a USB stick, we still need those champions of the human story: archivists. Archivists bring the past to the present and keep corporate memory alive by reminding us of tradition and history and the curiosities and differences that contribute to a collective identity. They understand that everything is built on what has happened previously, that change happens and needs to be documented, and that good records are required both for research and for a historical counterpoint to the rule of the implacable *now*.

For 28 years, Julianne Barlow has been the curator of the Genazzano story. The college has been fortunate to have had someone of Julianne’s calibre to keep an eye on the many artefacts, paintings, books, furnishings and ephemera that

Pictured above: Julianne Barlow in the Archives Room.

recreate the school story in a different period of time. That she is an *alumna* of the college also helped Julianne to give her inside story of being at school in the 1950s and 1960s. This has been especially gratifying for new students, who have been able to visit the Archives Room with its lovely lemony light and to see pictures, old uniforms and hand-written reports (no cut and paste, then!) and to gain an appreciation of the 130-year history of *the well-loved school upon the hill*. A couple of lucky students might even experience the thrill of ringing the bell in the small green spire by tugging strongly on the rope that hangs from the ceiling.

•••••
 • **Fun Fact:** Did you know that bells •
 • have names? Ours at Gen is called the •
 • Julie Guillemet after the thirteen-year-old •
 • girl who begged to become a companion •
 • to the Venerable Marie Madeleine •
 • d’Houët and loved her as a second •
 • mother. Julie died three weeks after the •
 • death of Marie Madeleine in 1858. •
 •••••

Over her time at Genazzano FCJ College, Julianne has mounted a number of exhibitions highlighting treasures from the Archives. Today’s students can see the houses’ history and the change in 1986 from Cardinal, Silver and Blue to the six houses we have today that recognise women who have made significant contributions to the school story: D’Houët, Stock, Gerda, Winter, Douglas and Corry. In the Ministry corridor there is a display that shows the books in which Gen girls of the 1940s – mid 1960s learnt to write. It has been noted by many that alumnae of a certain age have a distinctive Genazzano hand: clear, round, upright, with the occasional flourish of individuality.

Julianne arranged many displays in Our Lady’s Hall celebrating history of:

- Sport at Gen,
 - Vestments worn by visiting clergy,
 - The changing uniform,
 - Sodalties,
 - and the Centenary of the Past Pupils Association (2011). The Association is now known as the Alumnae.
- Included in the archives are original minutes and photographs of stylish ladies in hats and gloves of various early eras dressed, no doubt, in the latest fashion.

We are fortunate, indeed, to have the Stanislaus Room as a time capsule of another era. Julianne, together with Fr John Rogan and Fr Bernard Buckley, brother of Sr Helen Buckley fcJ, had the impetus and imagination to suggest the conservation of the old priest’s parlour to create an impression of the past for the appreciation of today’s students. Everything in the room is right for its time: the wallpaper, the cups and saucers, the bobbin lace-making frame, original copies of the school newsletter *The Echo*,

Julianne Barlow continued

the engraved print of the foundress and the glass-fronted cabinets stacked with theological tomes. Of particular interest is the copy of the original conceptual drawing for Genazzano by the son of architect, William Wilkinson Wardell. A convert to Catholicism, William Wardell is famed for his design of the neo-Gothic St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. Here we see the intention to have a chapel wing next to the tower in Kew, but Melbourne's economic 'bust' of the 1890s put paid to that grand vision.

For Julianne, her work reflected on the education of previous generations of Gen girls (and a small group of lucky boys!) and to enable the provenance and context to be reanimated and interpreted again by listening to lessons of the past. Her previous experience as a pictures librarian at the State Library of Victoria enabled her to make a valuable contribution to the centenary book, *And the Spirit Lingers*, edited by Sr Maria Bell fcj, and Ursula de Jong's *William Wardell and Genazzano FCJ College*. Julianne is interested in the match between text and image and importance of preserving cultural memory.

Julianne was always keen to share her expertise with new students to Genazzano, especially the Year 7s, who were being welcomed into the long story and tradition of the school. The ever-evolving Grey Lady story continues to be passed on with strange new additions to do with pearls and old boarding-house antics. Julianne loved curating her exhibitions, keen to make them interesting and accessible. In a scene reminiscent of *Dead Poets' Society* it is the photos of long-ago girls and their whispers to us today that imaginatively sum up what Archives do: they ask us to lean in and listen to the past.

Thanks, Julianne, for making the past come alive for us and for your many years of heartfelt commitment to Genazzano and the FCJ story – and for making, as John Berger notes, a *companionship* with those who have preceded us, the previous Gen-erations!

Ann Rennie

Marie Madeleine's Harp



Photo: Tom Coolidge Genazzano AV

‘... No one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing ... All this she must possess,’ added Darcy, ‘and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.’

The above excerpt is from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and fictively identifies those attributes becoming an 18th century English lady. Those who have read the book and/or seen the many filmed iterations will understand that women of a certain class were educated in the fine arts and had some understanding of the wider world that was not available to those of the working classes. Although this classic novel identifies pride and prejudices of some of the high-born, it also demonstrates the lessons and expectations that were instilled in children born into titled or wealthy echelons of society.



This was the world into which Marie Madeleine d’Houët was born across the English Channel in France, in the small town of Chateauroux in 1791. Her family had a long and pedigreed history, a family crest and a motto: *Bien sûr et laissez faire*. Translated this means: Do the right thing and do not worry about what others think. The family’s Catholic faith was central to how they lived and treated others. This was evidenced when, after three months in prison, Sylvan de Bengy was released by revolutionaries as he was so esteemed by his local community for his fair and kind treatment of all. How fortunate we are to have as our foundress a woman of wisdom and compassion who lived out the imprimatur of this motto and refused to be constrained by social expectations or obstacles when she sought to found the Society, Faithful Companions of Jesus, in 1820.

possess the harp she played, located now in the Heritage Room in Paris, and to know that our foundress understood and appreciated the balm and beauty of this instrument.

The harp is the oldest of all instruments of human making and its genesis came about after the hearing the sound of a hunter’s plucked bow string. The oldest documented references to the harp are from 3000 BCE in Mesopotamia and there are many references to the harp and lyre in the Psalms written by King David such as 43: 4, *On the harp I will praise you, O God*.

The poet Edna St Vincent Millay writes poignantly of an ailing Irish mother in *The Harp Weaver*:

*Her thin fingers, moving
In the thin, tall strings
Were weav-weav-weaving
Wonderful things.*

And we know of its popularity for weddings and in small classical ensembles, as well as featuring in Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* or *The Nutcracker* cadenza for harp which features in that ballet.

How fortunate are we at Genazzano to have a wonderful harp teacher, Mrs Deon Entwisle. Students Stephanie Huang (Year 5) and Tess Stewart (Year 12) are currently studying with her. Tess has been playing since Year 4 and her favourite piece is the Celtic song, *The Water is Wide*. Stephanie, who started her harp studies in Year 3, recently played beautifully during the Offertory Procession of the Opening Mass for 2020.

In this bicentenary year, we thought it would be a good idea to make the link between Marie Madeleine and her love of the harp and to acknowledge that we are carrying on this fine musical tradition. Under the supervision of Ms Janet Dawson, Director of Music, the college purchased a harp in 2019. This was made by the famed Chicago manufacturers, Lyon & Healy, who have been producing harps for the world since 1889 – coincidentally the same year that Genazzano was founded and the Eiffel Tower opened.

As we celebrate the founding of the Society in Amiens two hundred years ago, we will continue to enjoy the sonorous strains of the harp at school gatherings. We will be reminded of Marie Madeleine’s love of music and its power to transcend time and place, its magnificent democracy and freedom and the way it speaks to the soul.



Ann Rennie and Denise Mulcahy fcJ



As a child, Marie Madeleine would have been introduced to music. It would have been part of her Catholic upbringing to become familiar with hymns and liturgical music, such as *O Celeste Flamme*, and a knowledge of the popular airs and composers of the day. Her mother ensured she had a solid understanding of the domestic arts and we know that she would later develop a good head for business management as she managed her country estates and was *la bonne dame* to those who worked her landholdings. We do not know how proficient Marie Madeleine was with the harp. However, we are fortunate to



Pictured above: Marie Madeleine’s harp on display in Paris.

Pictured left: Genazzano students enjoy their musical education and heavenly strings of the harp.

Our cultural associations with the harp are often to do with the heavenly and angelic strings plucked to embody an ethereality, beauty or transcendence. Occasionally, the harp can be mournful and melancholic. Although not used so often in popular music, there is a notable introduction with the harp in The Beatles’ *She’s Leaving Home*.

Global Day of Kindness

20 September

Genazzano delighted in participating in the FCJ Global Day of Kindness to mark the commencement of the bicentenary of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus.

Celebrated by FCJ schools around the world, our Australian schools started a global kindness 'trend' as staff and students thoughtfully considered different ways to show kindness to one another.



As a staff, we took on a week of kindness and used a 'Kindness Calendar' to prompt us each day to be kind to both ourselves and others. Our kindness tree was placed in the staff room and each staff member was encouraged to select a name from it and shower that person with kindness over the week. This was fun and some very creative acts of kindness were experienced by our staff, simple things that brought joy and companionship to one another. Good intentions became actions with staff feeling affirmed and valued for who they are.

All week we were gearing up our students for the Global Day of Kindness, especially each morning in our Homerooms. On Friday 20 September, kindness spread like wildfire across the College with each student and staff member focused on doing something kind for someone else – that is over 1100 acts of kindness! A visual representation of this was created outside our Library where each student and staff member placed a heart-shaped sticky note as her/his act of kindness

...a wonderful expression of our charism and testament to the enormous legacy of our foundress, Marie Madeleine d'Houët.

was completed. Many of our Junior School students were just bursting to share what they had done for a fellow student or teacher!

What a wonderful expression of our charism and a testament to the enormous legacy of our foundress, Marie Madeleine d'Houët – a woman who was known for her desire and ability to reach out to others and meet their many and varied needs, a woman who lived the phrase 'love is kind' (1 Corinthians 13: 4).



Mary Jones
Head of Genazzano Junior School

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