

FCJnews

Area of Australia

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Thank you, Julie



Julie Chamberlin's generous spirit has driven many years of fundraising for those in need. One year 4500 fruit cakes were sold at Christmas to benefit young people in Romania and The Philippines.

PICTURED right to left: Julie Chamberlin; Sr Margaret Mary Kennedy fcJ; Sue Koay; Maureen Hoare.



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“ We need wisdom to recognise that the pain of endings precedes every new beginning in our lives. *Take courage therefore, and place your trust in God.*”

Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Houët



FCJ and CIM International virtual choir

Forging the future

Welcome to our final hard-copy edition of *FCJ News*.

However, as *FCJ News* has been a comprehensive and important record of FCJ Australia activities, we are hoping to continue production in digital form. We already have a web version, which is uploaded to the FCJ international website. Eliminating printing and postage will allow for considerable cost-saving.

Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* (*Care for Our Common Home*), reminds us: "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." (n. 202, LS)

FCJ News first edition was printed in Autumn 2009. For fourteen years it has provided a comprehensive glimpse of FCJ life and mission, including:

Fundraising for FCJ Missions – concerts, raffles, book sales, Christmas cakes, dinners etc;

Vow Ceremonies of FCJ Sisters in Indonesia, Myanmar and The Philippines;

Jubilee Celebrations of FCJ Sisters in Australia;

An account of the deaths of sixteen FCJ Sisters in Australia 2009–2022;

Reflections on Asia–Australia Province Assemblies and Provincial Chapters;

Celebration of the 40th anniversary in 2011 of Pope Paul VI's declaration in 1970 of the Heroicity of the virtues of Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Houët, which endowed her with the honorific 'Venerable';

An account of the transference of the mortal remains of Marie Madeleine from Broadstairs, UK, to Paris, France, in 2012;

The 130 Years Celebration of Vaucluse Convent FCJ in 2012, although the school closed in 2000;

Book reviews and the book launch at Genazzano of *Grit and Grace, The Story of Marie Madeleine de Bonnault d'Houët* (2013) by Ann Rennie;

Accounts of people and events in our two schools, FCJ College Benalla and Genazzano FCJ College, Kew. This included spirituality days with guest presenters and the work and activity of students;

The amazing contribution to FCJ life and mission by CiM, Companions in Mission;

Celebrating 140 years since the FCJs arrived in Australia 1 June 1882–1 June 2022.

ON THE COVER:



Over twenty three years, major fundraising led by Julie has included fruit cakes (4,500 sold in 2015).

Participation of many volunteers is involved, including students from various schools.

Proceeds of these activities provide education for young people in The Philippines and Romania. Julie had the joy of visiting both countries and meeting many grateful young people who benefited from her generous and creative heart.

COVER PHOTO: ©Peter Casamento. Used with permission from *Australian Catholics Magazine*.



PHOTO: Rowena Lennox

Care for Our Common Home

Our General Chapter 2019 calls us to *Care for Our Common Home*. We recognise God’s Spirit in the global movement, which is raising awareness of how we are destroying our Earth. Concerns around care of our common home are of great urgency. We judge them to be matters of deep justice.

FCJ Sisters and Companions in Mission around the world want to be active participants in the call to *Care for Our Common Home*. We want to live in the spirit of *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’ encyclical letter on the environment, through our prayer and through our action. We want to make connections with others, especially younger people, who are passionate about ecological issues, and join in positive action to bring about change.



LIVING LAUDATO SI’

Pope Francis’ world-changing encyclical letter, *Laudato Si’ (Care for Our Common Home)*, has helped us better understand that *everything is connected* and expressed the commitment of the Church to a journey to ecological conversion.

Laudato Si’ has put Catholic teaching in the context of today’s

ecological crisis and climate emergency. It offers a vision for building a more just and sustainable world and it has had an impact around the world, far beyond the Catholic circle. One of the most important points Pope Francis highlights is that climate crisis impacts in a special way the most vulnerable people in the world right now.

Integral ecology is a key concept which flows from Pope Francis’ understanding that *everything is closely interrelated and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis* (LS, 137). COVID

19 has made clear how deeply we are all interconnected and interdependent. We have an opportunity to create a more caring, fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world in harmony with the natural world, our common home.

FCJ Sisters have joined the *Laudato Si’ Platform*, a space created by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development for everyone in the Church to learn and grow together as we journey towards full sustainability in the holistic spirit of integral ecology.

“...things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change” (n. 202, LS)

We owe deep gratitude to those who served on the FCJ Communications Committee, responsible for the publication of *FCJ News*: First and foremost, Julie Chamberlin, the indefatigable chair, communicator and networker for all these years; Margaret Mary Kennedy fcJ (dec); Rosemary Crowe fcJ; Elizabeth Brown fcJ; Denise Mulcahy fcJ; Ann Rennie; Anne McIlroy; Carol Rosenhain; Chris Heffernan and Helen Buckley fcJ. We also thank our creative design coordinator, Maggie Power, and guest editor, Denise Symonds.

To Sr Barbara Brown-Graham fcJ and Sr Judith Routier fcJ, our FCJ Leaders during these years, thank you for your beautiful reflections and support of *FCJ News*.

Finally, to you our readers across Australia and the world, thank you for your faithful readership and ongoing contribution to the FCJ Mission.

You can access all *FCJ News* on the international website: www.fcjsisters.org/resources



Helen Buckley fcJ
Area Consultor
FCJ Australia

Pictured below: Paradise Falls, Victoria.



PHOTO: Maggie Power



Brenda Niall returns to her Alma Mater

Brenda Niall is one of Australia’s foremost writers and biographers. She has written nine biographies, her subjects including Martin Boyd, Georgiana McCrae, the artist Judy Cassab and more recently Daniel Mannix, amongst others. Her books are highly regarded and she has been awarded the prestigious Order of Australia (AO) Medal for services to Australian literature, amongst other awards.

Brenda is one of Genazzano’s most distinguished alumnae, and she has written of her time at the school in *Life Class* (2007) and more recently in *My Accidental Career* (2022).

The college was fortunate to welcome Brenda to speak about *My Accidental Career* in September of this year. A large gathering of the Genazzano community came together at the college to hear Brenda in conversation with Michael McGirr, a reviewer and writer.

Brenda, who came to the school in 1936 with her sister Philippa, wrote about her mother and her sisters attending Genazzano. She describes the school as a formidable place with ‘steep, dark and twisting’ back stairs that she refused to use. She writes with affection about ‘special treatment’ she received from the nuns, which she says was due to their care for her because of her childhood asthma and their respect and gratitude for her father.

The richness of the literary influences in her childhood and her long periods of illness at home meant that Brenda had precocious reading skills, which she says would have made her a nuisance in grade one. It is interesting that the future biographer of Dr Mannix, the Archbishop of Melbourne, received

her First Communion from him, as she had missed it due to illness. Brenda writes that it was both a rare honour and an unwanted privilege for a shy child. Brenda was one of sixteen girls who matriculated in 1948, and she notes that seven of the sixteen went to Melbourne University. One of these was Phil Joshua, who studied medicine at Melbourne University and went on into general practice. Philomene Joshua was the Outstanding Alumna at Genazzano in 2022.

Brenda, after many years of writing about the lives of others – prominent Australians who had shaped our social, cultural and political life – turned to her own life and explored what she calls ‘a series of accidents, in which timing plays a big part’ that led to two satisfying careers, in academia and as a writer.

“...a very enjoyable evening for past pupils of the college and others drawn by the lure of hearing Australia’s foremost biographer speak about her own life.”

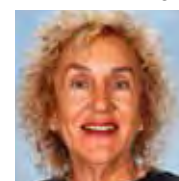
Pictured left: Brenda Niall with Michael McGirr in conversation at Genazzano College.

Above: Brenda Niall’s autobiography, *Life Class: The Education of a Biographer*, was published in 2007 by Melbourne University Press.

My Accidental Career is published by Text Publishing reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0.

In her conversation with Michael McGirr, Brenda spoke about the ‘series of accidents’ and the careers they helped to create. Through a chance meeting with a friend, she joined the English department at the Australia National University (ANU) in Canberra, which led to her taking a position at the newly established Monash University, in Clayton, Victoria. In 1964 it was new and unformed, and was the right place for her at this time. Michael asked her about her position at Monash and she spoke about the friendships that were formed at this time with her colleagues, the first-class honours for her doctoral thesis that she achieved in this period, and her research into Edith Wharton.

My Accidental Career is an absorbing read. The conversation with Michael McGirr and the lively questions were part of a very enjoyable evening for past pupils of the college and others drawn by the lure of hearing Australia’s foremost biographer speak about her own life.



Anne McIlroy
Teacher
Genazzano FCJ College

Widening the circle of love – celebrating companionship in Myanmar



Pictured above: The inscription on the tank reads: *FCJ Sisters Ireland, FCJ Bicentenary (1820–2020), ‘Celebrating Companionship’*. This is also written in Burmese.

As part of the of our FCJ Bicentenary (1820–2020) celebration in Ireland, we FCJ Sisters in Ireland decided to sponsor a Water Collection Tank in the Dry Zone in Central Myanmar.

We were very conscious of the added difficulties in many parts of the world where there are enormous problems regarding availability of water for cooking, hygiene and plant life – especially during COVID 19. The Living Water Myanmar project began in FCJ House, Myanmar, in 2010 when Maw Maw, a Buddhist student from the Dry Region, lived with us in the community in Yangon and I also had her in English class in Campion Institute where I taught. Maw Maw became a good friend and from her we learned many things.

From the sharing of Maw Maw’s stories regarding the impact of water shortages, a seed was sown. Rosemary, an FCJ friend from Australia who came each year to help, was with us in Yangon at the time. She said she

would start raising funds for Water Collection Tanks in Australia and vouched she would die happy if she could raise funds for 100 such tanks before she died. Rosemary has been extraordinarily committed to the cause and she is well on track to having a very happy death when the time comes because 340 Water Collection Tanks have now been built all around the Dry Zone, providing numerous schools and small villages with access to water!

I was responsible for ensuring a good local team was set up to take on responsibility for the building of the tanks and accountability for funds raised. This was very capably undertaken by Saya Toe whom I had got to know via Maw Maw at the time, and who continues to do a magnificent and faithful job, way beyond what

was hoped for. Great companionship developed between the Buddhist communities and the FCJs and Rosemary over the years, each offering a blessing to the other.

So in 2020, when we celebrated the bicentenary of the founding of FCJ Sisters in France by Marie Madeleine d’Houët, we were delighted in Ireland to sponsor a Water Collection Tank in the Dry Zone, Myanmar.

We rejoice in a spirit of thanksgiving for the companionship that we have shared over the past years. May it go from strength to strength.

[Read more about bicentenary of the foundation of the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus \(1820–2020\). Follow our bicentenary celebrations on the Bicentenary News page and on social media #FCJ200.](#)

Marion Dooley fcj

“ Let us ask Our Lord to give us the spirit of the Society of Jesus; since we have Constitutions, it is God’s will that we should have its spirit. ”

Marie Madeleine d’Houët



Above: Liturgy Prefect, Kiera Hardege, at the podium on Genazzano Day, the feast day of Our Good Lady of Counsel, 2022.

Genazzano Day

Thank you all for joining us today. Happy 133rd Gen Day.

Thankfully, we are back face to face after two years of odd events. We have just completed our first normal Term 1 and started a hopefully normal Term 2. It was exhausting getting through a full term physically at school without the lockdown gaps. As we enter into the third week, we are almost back to normal, but not quite. All over, people have been talking about the new normal.

It has been quite a journey over the last two years and I am so glad that we can come together to celebrate this wonderful day for our school community again. Whether you have been here for thirteen years, twenty years, or even a few months, everyone is part of the Gen Soul. What I mean is, people who rejoice in the spirit of Genazzano, from 1889 to the present and in years to come.

Gen Day is not just a day off from schoolwork and study. There is something more about this amazing day that makes it so beautiful. I've been here since Year 7 and I've known what it has meant since I stood up to sing *How far I'll go from Moana* ... completely out of tune, mind you, but

from that year something stuck.

To find out how to put it into words I asked around the school what Gen Day meant to everyone. I went to Grange Hill and I was told that Gen Day is about freedom, making friends, eating cotton candy, giving a concert and having lots of fun. I also asked Ms Fahey, who has been teaching here for over twenty years. She said that today is our feast day where we celebrate our past, present and future. Questioning her Year 7 class, I mostly got thoughtful or confused expressions, with one comment stating that it is the school's birthday, which is certainly true.

I asked around during lunchtime and received responses such as unity, fun, friendship, eating food, dressing in house colours, de-stressing, winding down from the week, donating to the Sisters FCJ and, of course, no Maths tests.

Everyone had their own response. Finally, I asked myself, what does Gen Day mean for me as a Year 12 prefect? It reminds of our special FCJ community which has grown since Marie Madeleine d'Houët heard the Lord's words, *I thirst*. This is where

Let gentleness be our strength.

we celebrate who we are, where we came from, who we want to be.

Every year we perform our heart out for each other in our houses. All the colour around the school during the lunchtime activities is lively and vibrant. Today is a day of connection with our friends, our teachers and our cohort. This day is where we all shine. Everyone from the past dances with us. Our school's soul, I believe, is all of ours in one. We have been given this beautiful gift as our school community grows, blessed by Marie Madeleine d'Houët. That's what stuck for me in Year 7 as a new Gen soul. This is what sticks with me now in my last year at Genazzano.

There is something so beautiful and powerful about our community. We have strength in unity with God. We have strength in each other. We have strength with the ones who came before us, like Mother Philomena Douglas with wisdom, Mother Gerda Prytz with loyalty, Mother Stanislaus Stock with courage, Ellen Corry with companionship, Mary Winter with service and last but certainly not least Marie Madeleine d'Houët with fidelity. We have seen how the 2022 college theme, *Let gentleness be our strength*, has been enacted in the past by these fine women after whom our houses are named. Their qualities shine through all of you.

Every day I come to school, perhaps dreading my upcoming assignments or the piles of homework, but the life within everyone makes it worthwhile. I'm sure the Year 12s would agree with me when I say that we could not graduate in a more beautiful school with such wonderful people lifting us up. I am sure that Marie Madeleine d'Houët is encouraging each one of us to look ahead together, with fortitude and strength.

In the spirit of our school, I would like to thank you all once again.

Remember: *Let gentleness be our strength.*



Kiera Hardege
Liturgy Prefect 2022



Left: Sr Frances Kennedy fcJ with Sr Barbara Brown-Graham fcJ
Right: Sr Céline Nolan fcJ

Celebrating the lives of three wonderful FCJ Sisters – past students of FCJ College Benalla

During the second part of this year we FCJ Sisters and friends have had the opportunity to pay tribute to three FCJs on the occasions of two jubilees and a funeral. Sisters Frances Kennedy and Benedicta Quinlan (affectionately known as Sr Ben) celebrated their 60th anniversary of vows. Sr Céline Nolan died on 26 August and was buried from the Genazzano chapel.

It was at Genazzano College that Sr Céline began her FCJ life, and lived whilst teaching in the parish schools, and then she moved across the garden to St Raphael's (now the site of the Madeleine Centre) as a member of the nursing staff and FCJ community. Sr Céline's life of ministry and service in Australia and abroad could be divided into four parts, which were not mutually exclusive: teaching, nursing, pastoral work, the ministry of suffering and prayer. She was a loyal and faithful friend to many and that included her feline companions! The large number attending her Requiem Mass at Genazzano attested to the long-standing esteem and affection in which she was held. Another Faithful Companion of Jesus home with the God who called her, sustained her and loves her with an everlasting love! May she rest in peace.

Many former boarders at Genazzano in the 1960s will remember with affection Sr Ben who was a great ally and friend in the dining room! Following ministry at Genazzano, Sr Ben was a foundation member of the new FCJ community at Stella Maris in Frankston: she was an extraordinary pioneer and



Above: Srs Barbara, Judith, Margaret Claver, Liz, Rosemary, Anne and Bing celebrating Sr Ben's jubilee (Ben in front in wheelchair)

could put her hand to anything practical and creative. After Frankston, she served as Community Leader and FCJ Province Bursar, working from St Raphael's. Her last active ministry before returning to Benalla was for many years as a valued pastoral care minister with Mercy Palliative Care in the western suburbs. The jubilee celebration at Coinda Aged Care Benalla was a wonderful tribute to Sr Ben! Despite the many challenges

that her life brings now, Sr Ben's sense of joy and gratitude for the gift of life shines through.

During the month of October, grateful for the wonderful hospitality of Mrs Loretta Wholley and the Genazzano family, we gathered in the Madeleine Centre to celebrate the 60th jubilee of vows of Sr Frances – a former teacher, Deputy Principal and Board Director at the college. Sr Frances was a wonderful teacher and educator at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Many of her former students at Mercy Teachers College (now ACU) recall with gratitude her pastoral and professional care of them. Her ministry in school and FCJ leadership were marked by the great personal care of others – tempering firmness with gentleness. Her keen intellect and sense of humour combine to make her a wonderful conversationalist and a fun person to be with! Fittingly, as we gathered

in the Furlan room for the speeches, there were friends and colleagues from the many stages of her life who



were honoured to be able to express their gratitude. Sr Frances now lives at St Catherine's in Balwyn.

Barbara Brown-Graham fcJ
Area Leader, FCJ Australia

A valiant woman

“Who shall find a valiant woman? Who shall find a woman of strength? A pearl of great price is she... She opens her heart to the needy; she is generous with the poor.”
(Proverbs 31: 10, 20)

These words of Scripture seem very apt to describe Julie Chamberlin. For many years Julie has been an unfailing support to many people associated with the FCJ Center in Manila. Every year she and her team produced thousands of delicious Christmas cakes for sale. The planning and organisation that went into this venture can only be imagined! Nothing daunted Julie.

Julie also organised a variety of other fundraising events. The proceeds of these and the cake sales enabled young people from poor families to go to college or university and obtain degrees. Over the years, 125 students have been given a scholarship for a four-year course; 95 scholars have already graduated and are now working and 30 are still studying.

This opportunity has been life-changing, not just for the students but also for their families. Once they graduate and find a job, the young people can offer financial support to their family and enable their younger siblings to study. The scholars and their families are very grateful for all the support they received.

“The good Julie has done here in Bagong Silangan will live on in the lives of the people who have been supported with such interest and commitment.”

But the students were not the only ones who benefited from Julie’s dedication and generosity. Some women, all of them mothers of families, produced a variety of craft products: cards, bead jewellery and items made from material woven by women in Mindanao. Julie placed orders for the goods and persuaded many parishes and schools in Victoria, Australia, to sell them. The income generated was a great help to the women and they greatly valued Julie’s interest in and appreciation for their products.



Pictured above: Julie and Sr Paola enjoying meeting locals and children in one of the streets around the FCJ Center in Manila.

Pictured below: Julie visiting some of the students and women from the FCJ Center in Manila. Many were the students and women she had supported. They had the chance to meet her and to express their thanks personally. It was a happy time with lots of conversations and laughter. FCJ Center staff, too, were very happy to meet such a faithful and generous supporter.



Photo: © Peter Casamento

Pictured above: Julie orchestrating the Christmas cake fundraising.

In 2015, Julie visited the FCJ Center and many of the students and women she had supported had the chance to meet her and to express their thanks personally. It was a very happy time with lots of conversations and laughter. The FCJ Center staff, too, were very happy to meet such a faithful and generous supporter.

The good Julie has done here in Bagong Silangan will live on in the lives of the people who have been supported with such interest and commitment. Thanks to Julie there is still a substantial sum available to enable even more young people to complete their tertiary education.



Paola Terroni fcJ
FCJ Center Manila

Thank you so much, Julie. We wish you all the best and assure you of our prayers and gratitude! *Mabuhay!*

Thank you, Julie

Those of us who have been working on *FCJ News* with Julie over the last number of years can say with hands on hearts that we have loved the experience. Julie guided us with grace and good humour and always had the bigger FCJ picture in mind, careful that each edition covered a variety of stories and angles so that the reader was engaged.

Her leadership was gentle and wise and we have all been proud to contribute in any capacity to this bi-annual publication. Julie has a prodigious network and was able to call on experts to help with various endeavours. To fundraise for Romania and The Philippines she co-ordinated a number of musical afternoons where gifted musicians and talented students performed. Julie was the queen of Christmas cakes. Over a period of 19 years, she and her team raised \$720,000 for the FCJ Sisters. Those Christmas cakes were fruity and delicious and much fun was had baking, wrapping and selling these – a great bake-off tradition long before the TV version was invented!

One of the many delights of working with the *FCJ News* team was meeting regularly at Julie’s home. Whenever we stepped across the threshold we breathed out, her home being something of an oasis of calm in a frenetic world. Julie’s lounge room became the place of discussion and laughter, old stories shared, news exchanged, items on the agenda and any other business – which could be anything from local affairs to the state of the Church and who was related to whom and how. It was always a pleasure, never a chore, to work together to produce something we felt honoured the various activities undertaken by different groups in the Province of Asia–Australia.

Julie is a treasure. We have benefited from her wisdom, her diligence and her absolutely indefatigable effort for all things FCJ.

After a day teaching, it was always a blessing to arrive at Julie’s and to see what gastronomic treats she had for us. Of particular delicacy were her signature ham sandwiches, the ham almost as fine as tissue paper on the freshest of bread. Sometimes there were chocolates and buttery shortbreads. This was always served with the good china and Julie had a knack for choosing paper serviettes which matched her crockery. This was afternoon tea done properly, *old-school* and charming!

Julie is a treasure. We have benefited from her wisdom, her diligence and her absolutely indefatigable effort for all things FCJ. She is a role model of what it is to contribute wholeheartedly to causes that matter. She is also an FCJ Companion in Mission, dedicated to companionship with others and with God.

We thank God for the work we have done and the sharing we have enjoyed under the charge of this vibrant and valiant woman, Julie Chamberlin, OA.



Ann Rennie
Author and Teacher
Genazzano FCJ College

Mother Veronica Lardner fcJ 1883–1962

Anne Veronica Lardner was born in Moonie Ponds on 26 July 1883. Her mother, Anne Cosgrove, came from County Meath in Ireland and her father, John Lardner, came from County Galway. Anne Veronica was baptised in St Monica's Church, Moonie Ponds, on 12 August 1883.

John Lardner worked in the Surveyor General's department and spent many years in Gippsland surveying for the government. When he was transferred to Bairnsdale Vera attended the local Bairnsdale school and later went as a boarder to a convent in Sale run by the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion.

Over the next four years Vera proved herself a gifted student with all-round ability in Humanities, Mathematics and Music. In the examination at the end of the year of 1898 she matriculated in English, French, Geography, Arithmetic, Geometry and Trigonometry, receiving honors in English and French.

Since Vera was only 15, her parents felt she was too young to leave school so they decided to send her to the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus, at Genazzano, Kew, to continue her education and to 'learn some accomplishments'. Records show that Vera gained first prize in Religious Education, Reading, Elocution, Piano, Theory of Music and Drawing. She played the piano, violin and organ. Vera was also quite good at tennis and a good team member in other sports.

In 1902 Vera became head girl at Genazzano. After leaving school with a desire to enter with the FCJs she spent some months at home enjoying the company of her family before she entered the convent on 25 April 1903.

After her religious profession Vera became known as Mother Veronica and taught junior classes at Genazzano while studying part-time at Melbourne University. At university she passed Part I Latin, Greek, French, English and Logic.

In her spare time Mother Veronica joined the woodwork classes with Mother Gerda Prytz. They chip-carved tables, chairs, pedestals and wood-boxes, and their largest work was a great oak side-board still to be seen at Genazzano, Kew.

¶ She was a gifted and capable teacher introducing girls to a wide range of subjects in such a way that true education became part of their lives. ¶

Another God-given gift given to Mother Veronica was the art of water divining, possibly inherited from her father, which skill she endeavoured to pass on to her students with varying success.

In 1915 Mother Veronica was transferred to Vaucluse Convent in Richmond, Victoria, where she taught the Junior Public classes, taught the violin and played the organ. In 1923 Mother Veronica was appointed Headmistress at Vaucluse and took up her university studies again. At the end of the following year she passed Part II Greek and Latin and Part II Botany. She completed her Diploma of Education and by the end of 1926 had completed her degree with Part III Latin.

In the meantime Mother Veronica set up a Commercial Class at Vaucluse to help girls with limited financial backing. So successful was this class that there were usually more demands from employers looking for responsible girls than there were applicants to satisfy them.

For the next 28 years Mother Veronica remained in charge of studies at Vaucluse. For those days she was highly qualified but her ability was much more than a piece of paper. She was a gifted and capable teacher introducing girls to a wide range of subjects in such a way that true education became part of their lives.

A woman of vision, she also continued to do courses to equip her for the teaching of Religious Education and to keep herself up to date in education. As for discipline in the classroom





Photo: Helen Buckley fcJ

Facing page: Mother Veronica Lardner.

Above: The old Vacluse Convent and beautiful gardens in Richmond, Victoria in 2023.

and elsewhere, no student ever thought of misbehaving. When she scolded or punished students there was no resentment. Like all truly gifted people, Mother Veronica was a humble and unassuming woman. She had a quiet sense of humour and exuded peaceful happiness. Teachers found her to be considerate. Each year some variety was introduced into the timetable. In this way she extended the teacher's capabilities and children's interests, ensuring that no one was in a rut.

In 1939 Mother Veronica introduced the Young Christian Students' Movement (YCS) to Vacluse and undertook to train the leaders herself – a training that has lasted a lifetime for the students.

In 1947 Vacluse became an 'A' school which necessitated biennial inspections. One examiner's report noted that '*Vacluse had a well-qualified and stable staff*' and added that '*it was mostly due to their competent headmistress who was well-qualified, sympathetic,*

loyal to her staff, just and a model of all those qualities she expected of her teachers and students'.

In 1959 Mother Veronica transferred to FCJ Benalla as the Local Leader. Here she continued to encourage the teaching staff and endeared herself to the local community and beyond. During these years this great woman manifested another side to her character – leading her community by example rather than precept. She was gracious, gentle, unassuming and interested in the concerns of each one.

In 1959 Mother Veronica Lardner was diagnosed with cancer and slowly began to modify her lifestyle. She died as she lived, quietly and gently, on 10 October 1962, aged 80 years and in the 57th year of her religious profession.

Taken from a booklet written by Sisters Anthony Buckley fcJ and Sr Elizabeth Von Leven fcJ

❖ Vacluse had a well-qualified and stable staff... it was mostly due to their competent headmistress who was well-qualified, sympathetic, loyal to her staff, just and a model of all those qualities she expected of her teachers and students. ❖

Marie Madeleine d'Houët Religious Competition

Inaugurated in 2008 for the 150th anniversary of the foundress' death, the annual Marie Madeleine d'Houët Religious Competition was initially a writing competition. However, over the years students have demonstrated great originality in responding to the year-level prompts. These reflect on the annual school theme and an aspect of Marie Madeleine's life that is exemplified by certain characteristics.

The students choose one of these prompts and use this as stimulus for creating a personal and meaningful response. Our 2022 theme is *Let gentleness be our strength*.

BE TRUTHFUL, GENTLE AND FEARLESS

Bonnie Grace, a Year 7 student, decided to create a linocut, which she then painted with watercolours. Her chosen prompt is *Be truthful, gentle and fearless*.

Bonnie explained her artistic choices and the prompt selection. "The vines represent the lovely grounds at Genazzano and are also a reminder of the vineyards of Marie Madeleine's childhood in France. The *Be truthful, gentle and fearless* phrase sums up the abiding example of Marie Madeleine and the aspirations of each Gen girl as they make their way in the world".

How wonderful to see new representations of our venerable foundress as her story is passed on to be treasured by the next generation of Gen girls.



Marie Madeleine linocut
Bonnie Grace
Year 7 Genazzano FCJ College student



Ann Rennie
Author and Teacher
Genazzano FCJ College

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

See the FCJ and CiM International Virtual Choir sing *Touch the earth with love* at: fcjsisters.org/resources

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