

Summer 2017 Number 220



REGISTERED CHARITY
NO. 1056064

Our Lady's Newsletter



Celebrating the Silver Jubilee of St Scholastica's Convent, Makkiyad

Newsletter of The Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace and Compassion
GRACE & COMPASSION CONVENT, 38/39 PRESTON PARK AVENUE, BRIGHTON BN1 6HG

SISTER KATHY'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Welcome to this mid-year newsletter and I'm pleased to say that this Pentecost weekend really feels like Summer. Long may it last! Eastertide has come to an end and here in England many sisters have just returned or are planning their holidays. I understand that the months of March and April have been unbearably hot in India and Sri Lanka and that many places were desperate for rain. Likewise in East Africa they have been praying for rain after some very dry months.

At the end of December Sister Gabrielle reached the great age of 95 years and Sister

Elizabeth will reach the same milestone this year whilst Sister Magdalene celebrated her 94th birthday in April. Each in her own way our senior sisters are still very much part of the communities in which they live.

In February Sister Carmel and I went to Sri Lanka for the official Visitation of Melville Priory and we also managed to visit the other three houses and met all the sisters. We were pleased to see the progress of the building of the new residential home at Horana, about an hour from Moratuwa and we look forward to seeing the completed project, hopefully on our next visit.

At the end of February, just before the start of Lent some of us gathered at Holy Cross Priory for a retreat given by Fr Jim Hurley and this served as a fitting introduction to various meetings, including our General



Commemorating the 10th anniversary of Mother Mary's death

Council, held in March. We were pleased to welcome our sisters from overseas and whilst they were with us we commemorated the 10th anniversary of Mother Mary's death with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Richard.

Last year I mentioned that I attended a meeting in Rome of Superiors from all over the world. The large group is broken down into "Constellations" based on language groups and geographical areas. Here in England we are joined by sisters from Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Hungary and Norway and we meet in a different country every three years. This year we were the hosts and just after Easter we spent a few days at Hinsley Hall in Leeds and had a very enriching time. For me the highlight was an outing/pilgrimage to the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University, Durham Castle and Cathedral and finally Ushaw College.

The following week I flew to Uganda with Sandra O'Reilly who proudly calls herself the longest serving Shalom member, having joined the lay community at Holy Cross in the early eighties! She has now decided to spend some time in our African communities and by the time I returned to England she was already settled and eager to experience every aspect of life in Kenya and Uganda.

We are very happy to have three of our Junior Sisters from East Africa staying in England for a few months to experience the life and culture of the place where the Congregation began. We enjoyed taking them on a trip to Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight and they have also been regular visitors to Worth Abbey. We will miss them when they move on to Tanzania for the next stage of their preparation for Final Profession.

Meanwhile two of our sisters are taking part in a 3 month course for Monastic Formators in Rome and Assisi and we hope this experience will greatly benefit our future sisters in Formation. Sister Jaya is still helping out at the Monastery in the Holy Land and will be there until early 2018.

Sr Carmel and I have just attended the UMS (Union of Monastic Superiors) Assembly at Douai Abbey and we were very privileged to have our Abbot Primate with us. We also went to Lambeth Palace to visit the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Community of St Anselm and this was most inspiring.

As I have probably admitted on other occasions I am usually the last contributor to the newsletter but that does give me the advantage of reading all the other news and avoiding duplication! However I would like to mention how pleased I was to read about the Silver Jubilee celebrations at Makkiyad and various events elsewhere including the Initiation and Profession ceremonies.

Looking ahead a little I will soon be going to India where I hope to be in Piravom, Kerala for the blessing of the new convent in July. The building of the residential home is well underway but the opening will be at a later date, hopefully this year.

Looking ahead, there are Visitations due this year at the houses in England and Kenya and the Priory in India.

We are currently preparing for our next General Chapter in March 2018. Please keep us in your prayers and we assure you of our prayers and appreciation for your support.

Sr Kathy

HOLY CROSS PRIORY HEATHFIELD

Spring has arrived at the Priory, and the Village is in bloom. The avid gardeners living in St Mary's flats are almost competitive about their gardens and pots! Another sign that spring is here is the sight of Trevor hoovering the bowling green each week, and the residents enjoying the use of this facility. The carpet bowls are now packed up and stored for next winter!

Golden Zumba remains very popular with residents here. It brings out the Latin in the ladies, and keeps everyone fit. Louis is a local hairdresser, and loves coming to Holy Cross to run these classes. We now run yoga in the care home and also in the Priory

– this too is popular. Naomi, our Japanese volunteer, has been doing a lot of different Japanese cultural activities with the residents, which they have all thoroughly enjoyed. Mandy and Helen took a group of residents to Eastbourne for an outing. Fish-and-chips with a walk along the beautiful pier left everyone windswept but happy. They even made it to Beachy Head to look at the spectacular view.

There have been some significant birthdays celebrated on site. Lady Hazel received her telegram from the Queen for reaching 100 years, Janet Garner celebrated her 90th, and we have had a whole smattering of 80th's. All these were celebrated with family and friends. One couple are celebrating 60 years of marriage this month. Congratulations to you all! The Sisters had a curry take-away day, and this was very popular. They all



Sr Sheila's 80th birthday

worked so hard to make this a success and this was reflected in the sheer number of people who wanted to taste their delights! Our Bishop also enjoyed the curry on one of his visits here, and also used the Osborne Room to meet with the Parish Secretaries of the diocese. They were well looked after by our catering team, and we are really pleased that the Diocese wants to use our facilities. The Waldron market goes from strength to strength. The local community is attracted to Holy Cross by this event, and their use of the Function Room has led to a once dying market now thriving. The homemade marmalade, locally produced honey, and other produce are just fantastic. The stall holders are extremely grateful to the Sisters for allowing them to use the site, and the market is also very popular with our residents. The Stonehill Dining Room has altered its menus, and these changes have proved very popular. A new chef, Marta, has joined Andre to provide the delicious meals. She has a very light touch, and her sticky toffee pudding is sublime!

The community of Sisters here has had good cause to rejoice. On 27th January, Sister Sheila (of whom the words of Psalm 90:10 are so apt) celebrated her 80th birthday! Her edifying disposition inspires us all, and we enjoyed the flowers, balloons, and above all the lovely cake! May she continue to be blessed.

Remembering our Foundress is always a moment of grace for us. On 8th March, we had the 10th anniversary of Mother Mary's departure from this earthly life, and Bishop Richard concelebrated Mass together with our priests, in the presence of Sister Kathy, senior Sisters from around the world, and the Sisters, friends and residents here. Mother Mary's witness of faith and love continues to bear fruit, even in us, with hope!

Our life in the Priory underlines the coordination with the life of the Parish here, which in turn has brought the richness of acquaintance with the churches in the vicinity. One such moment was made possible on 5th February by our Parish Priest, Father Brian, who conducted a United Service with Churches Together in Heathfield and District. This took place in Holy Cross Chapel. As a result, the clerics, their families and their parishioners experienced devotion, friendliness, and a great appreciation for the place. It was actually a moment of awareness for us that we can come together in worship despite the differences in denomination. This is surely a way forward.

We wish all our readers a blessed, happy, and healthy summer!

ST MARY'S HOUSE BRIGHTON

Greetings from St. Mary's House.

By the time you read this, spring will be a distant memory. Our residents enjoyed a few warm days over the Easter period. The garden was a picture, full of beautiful golden daffodils, which now have disappeared to make way for the summer.

As with the change in the weather, we have had changes within St. Mary's. The year did not get off to a great start. We were very sad indeed to say goodbye to 2 of our long term residents, Daphne Flint and Tess Thompson, who both passed away peacefully. They had been with us for many years and are greatly missed by everyone. Another of our residents Doreen Baker, who had been transferred to a nursing home also passed away, along with Margaret Clark. Margaret had joined us from St. Joseph's

but unfortunately was only with us a few weeks. May they all rest in peace.

On a brighter note, we have welcomed Ray, Sr. Kathy's father, who is settling in very well, and Fr. Charles Jeffries from our Diocese. Sr. Delsiya has also joined us, and we are grateful to have her.



"Water Melon Creation" at St Mary's House

Our residents are still enjoying a wide range of activities, and all of the classes are well attended. Our budding artists continue to produce some fantastic art work in preparation for another art show during the winter months, and those that are able are still enjoying our Yoga and Exercise classes. Will O'Brien entertained everyone with some lovely songs from the Opera and the residents are very much looking forward to the magician, who will be visiting again soon. Our furry friends from Petals continue to captivate everyone. We are all looking forward to the longer warmer days, when everyone can venture out into the garden or over to the park for a bit of fresh air.

Everyone at St. Mary's would like to wish you all a happy "sun filled" summer and pray that our houses abroad receive some long awaited rain.

MORE HALL CONVENT RANDWICK, STROUD

Dear Readers

As I write this the sun is shining and the garden is full of flowers, all the blossom is out on the trees. I am reminded of: Home Thoughts From Abroad: "Oh to be in England, now that April's there". Yes indeed, we are blessed.

While Fr. Zacharias was on holiday, Fr. Brian Jerstice came to stay with us; he has now gone to supply at Montana. We were most grateful for his time with us. Our Chaplain, Fr. Zacharias, has now returned to India; we were sad to say goodbye to him as he has been with us for several years. In his place we welcome Fr. Jose Mathew, and hope he will soon feel at home with us.

Our residents are looking forward to being able to sit in the garden once again, it is almost warm enough already. Everyone enjoyed our New Year Programme, although January seems a long time ago now. We had fun doing egg decorating with the residents before Easter. They really enjoyed this. We have also started Bingo sessions again, with 96 year old Don calling the numbers. An activity every resident can enjoy is singing, and we try to have this each week. Even those with dementia are able to join in and somehow the words come to them. Our volunteers are so good; they are busy people and give generously of their time and energy to provide entertainment for us. Our thanks, as always, to our dedicated and loyal Friends of More Hall, who do so much for us, freely and lovingly. We are now preparing for our Easter Bonnet Parade on Easter Monday, when everyone shows off their beautiful hats!! We hope to have

MONTANA & OAKAMPTON HOUSE GREAT BARTON

an outing on the canal this year with the Willow Trust, something everyone enjoys. Our garden party will be on Saturday 8th July - if any of you are nearby, please do come along to support us. We sadly said goodbye to our Centenarian, Lillian, who died in April. She enjoyed her 100th year celebration last year; she was such a great character. Sr. Magdalene is not too well these days, but she was able to enjoy her 94th birthday in April and sends good wishes to all those who remember her. In May we had a curry supper for our staff and The Friends of More Hall. We are so blessed with our staff and helpers.



Sr Magdalene's 94th birthday

We have had CCTV installed, reluctantly, due to late night suspicious activity. Since we came to More Hall in 1968 this has not been necessary, until now. A sign of changing times?

It is always good to welcome Sr Kathy and Fiona on their visits and we thank them for all their support and help. Best wishes from all at More Hall Convent

Our warmest good wishes from Montana and Oakampton House, where we are enjoying a very happy springtime.

Looking back over the winter, we have had much to enjoy. On 1st December we had a lovely outing to the Bunbury Arms nearby, where we had a delicious pre-Christmas lunch paid for by a benefactor and friend of Montana. It was so generous, and we had a very happy time.

We had some happy events around Christmas time - a lovely Christmas meal prepared by the Sisters, as a thank you to friends, staff and residents. Then a very enjoyable musical evening with a talented out-going singer of Christmas songs and carols, who drew us all in to the singing - while Sr. Thaya and Sr. Monica drew us into the dancing, performing with reindeer horns on their heads! It was hilarious. Then our friends from the Holy Innocents Anglican Church came and gave us an evening of carols, which was lovely.

In mid January, the Sisters and Oblates had a very happy visit to Walsingham. We had plenty of prayerful time in the Shrine, before enjoying a picnic lunch together and visiting the ancient Slipper Chapel where people used to leave their shoes before walking the Holy Mile into Walsingham. In March we had a happy visit to Marlow's Garden Centre where the Sisters, residents and friends enjoyed a cream tea together with a huge score!

Sr. Thaya had a lovely fortnight in India, and was made very welcome. She visited the

communities in Tiruvannamalai, Adaiyur and Yercaud and very much enjoyed seeing the Sisters, especially Sr Flora who was very happy to see her. Do please keep Sr. Flora in your prayers. Sr Thaya thanked the communities for their hospitality.

It was lovely to have Sr Metilda, Indian Prioress, with us for two days. She joined with us for the outing to the garden centre. She enjoyed our company.

We had a beautiful Easter, deeply moving, and we wish you all its joys. Now we are looking forward to the summer, and more outings arranged by our friends, also the pleasures of the gardens at Montana and Oakampton. We are so grateful to our friends for all that they do for us, and to those who come regularly, week by week, to enliven our days with scrabble, bingo, crafts, singing, and our shop and to Dorothy, one of our residents, who shares her lovely poetry with us.

Sadly Fr. Chris, our Chaplain, hasn't been well and he is in our prayers. Fr. Brian Jerstice has been staying with us and saying Mass, and we greatly appreciate and value

his presence, also Fr. Julian from Sr. Thaya's home town of Batticaloa in Sri Lanka (studying in Rome) who was with us for Holy Week and Easter.

Two of our residents have died, Maggie Hayes and Patrick McDermott, and we miss them very much. They had been with us for a considerable time. We have welcomed Joy Stevens and Joan Smith, and it is lovely to have them here, likewise Barbara Goddard and Sylvia Walton who are staying with us for a short while. We are happy to say for the third time we have been awarded one of the Care Home UK top 20 care home awards for 2017. These awards highlight the most recommended care homes in each region of the UK. We thank our staff and all the help received.

We welcomed Sr. Jenette to our community, while Sr. Jacintha is away in India. It is lovely too, to have Sr. Sabina back, and to have Sr. Jemima with us. We miss Sr. Monica who is doing a course.

We send you our warmest wishes, with our prayers, thinking of all of you who read our news. Do give us a remembrance in yours.



Sister and resident at Montana

Oakampton House

Life continues comfortably in the peaceful surroundings of Oakampton House, set in its lovely gardens cared for by Norah, one of our residents, who is so generous in the work she does. We have welcomed Charles and Jan, and are delighted that they have come to live with us. We have sadly said goodbye to Maureen (Greenhall) and Maureen (Chang) whom we miss, wishing them all the best in their new lives. We have one flat vacant in Oakampton, and do contact Sr. Thaya if you would like to know more.

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SRI LANKA

MELVILLE

Dear friends,

As we are still in the Season of Easter we write to you with the Joy and celebration of our Risen Lord. May the Peace of Christ be with you all!

We are delighted once again to share news from "Melville". As is customary, Christmas was celebrated meaningfully and the beautiful crib in the Chapel reminded us



Final profession of Srs Mercy & Jena at Melville

of the greatest event in history "The Word made Flesh". The climax was the Celebration of the Midnight Mass participated by all residents and helpers, including the non-Christians. This was followed by fellowship organized in the lounge. Everyone was served with Christmas cake and wine. All of the residents and helpers received gifts. Throughout the Christmas season delicious dishes were served at all meals. The New Year was welcomed with Benediction followed by the Eucharistic Celebration. This was also well attended by the residents.

Celebrations did not end there, there were still more to come. In December Sr. Nirosha made her 1st Profession. Soon after the New Year Sr. Mercy and Sr. Jena made their Final Profession. Rev. Fr. Shamindra, Prior of the Sylvestro Benedictines was the chief Celebrant. Parents and relatives of the sisters were present at Holy Mass to thank and praise God for their lives dedicated to God. We are also pleased that one of our postulants, Sudarshani Fernando entered the Novitiate in April. We ask the Lord to shower His choicest blessings that they may continue their mission in the Lord.

The Moratuwa Parish Church celebrated the feast of their Patron Saint, St. Sebastian on 20th January. Some of the Sisters attended the Vespers Service on the 19th evening followed by dinner at which the clergy and religious of the parish and neighbouring parishes were present. In the evening the procession carrying the statue of St. Sebastian commenced from the church and proceeded along the roads around the parish and came back to church. The residents were able to watch the procession as it passed "Melville".

Many of our residents celebrated birthdays, some of them on a grand scale, where Mass was offered for them and a special meal. A

musician entertained all of the residents for these celebrations.

We were honoured by the visit of Rev. Fr. Shamindra, Prior of Sylvestro Benedictine with their Abbot General Dom Michael Kelly and their co-visitor Dom Vincent Korandiarkunnel on their official visit to the Sylvestro Benedictines.

We were also delighted to welcome Sr. Kathy and Sr. Carmel who arrived here in February for the Official Visitation of the Community. The few days they spent with us were very enriching and gave much encouragement to continue our services.

Lent has been a great spiritual experience when we were led into a meditation on coming back to the Lord. We were blessed with three priests during Holy Week who took us in to a deeper recollection on the paschal mystery of Christ, ultimately filling us with great joy for the Easter Celebration.

Our lives are mixed with joy and sadness, welcomes and farewells. In the month of February there were two transfers. Sr. Kanita went to the Community of Chilaw while Sr. Jena moved to the Community of Ja-ela. We wish them God's blessings to bloom where they are planted.

In March Sr. Heloise left for England for meetings, while Sr. Latha went to Rome to follow a three month course in Monastic Formation which would further help her in her mission. We bade farewell to Mr Carlo Reise, who left us to be with the Lord. May the Lord grant him the eternal reward.

This year also, our Sisters are spiritually enriched through preached retreats at Fatima Retreat House, Lewella.

So, dear friends, this is all about Melville in brief. Hoping to greet you with more news

in the next newsletter. Till then we wish you all good health, peace and happiness in the Lord!

ST JOAN'S CONVENT JA-ELA

Dear readers,

It is good to share some of our news with you once again. This year has been dedicated to St. Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka. Many events have been organized in the Archdiocese of Colombo to commemorate the occasion.

We have started to help the poor children by teaching them English and other subjects. Srs. Wasanthi and Dedunu are teaching them. We also visit the sick and house-bound in the area which they appreciate very much.

We started this year with a happy occasion when Srs. Mercy and Jena made their final profession at our Priory in Melville. We wish them many happy years in the Lord's vineyard.

There was a workshop on "Trauma Counselling" at our Convent, conducted by Rev. Fr. Claude Nonis, who is the Director for Family Apostolate in the Diocese and also Rev. Fr. Jude Peris. Most of us participated along with lay people and religious and it was over a period of three months. We found it very helpful and we take this opportunity to thank Frs. Claude and Jude for their help and guidance.

We were happy to welcome Sr. Kathy and Sr. Carmel during their recent visit to Sri Lanka.

We also welcomed Sr. Jena to our community and we wish her all the best.

Sadly we said farewell to two of our residents Mrs. Loudes Benedicta and Mr. Christy De Rose who were with us about 12 years. May their souls rest in peace.

The season of Lent is one of the busiest seasons for us, during which lots of activities take place. There was a Passion Play combined with ballet dancing which was very well conducted. There was a Lenten Pilgrimage to "Wahakotte Calvary" which is run by OSB Fathers and organized by the Parish. About ten thousand people participated in it and Srs. Dedunu and Jena also joined them.

As usual the Lenten program in the parish went very well and a massive crowd gathered for the Good Friday service which lasted till 8.30pm.

The people performed each event of the passion very solemnly and meaningfully. Each year we feel how blessed we are to be part of this great event of the Lord and experience the real spirit of Easter.

We have been getting very young children to visit our elders, and this time over 100 children from Ave Maria School in Bolawalana visited us for part of their Lenten program. Our residents thoroughly enjoyed their time with them. The other group were BA students from Aquinas College who were doing their "Human Social Development Project". They continue to come to us to do voluntary work such as gardening, planting, cleaning and helping us to arrange the library.

This year we have experienced very hot and dry weather during the whole of April. Many people contracted a viral fever and Dengu fever and some even lost their lives. We ask your prayers for those who are affected.

April is also the season for mangoes. We have been blessed with plenty of fruit which we continue to enjoy and are also able to share with our other communities and neighbours.

We said goodbye to Rev. Frs. Chrishantha Jayalath and Placid Anthony OMI and thanked them for helping us with Masses over the last three years. We appreciate their kindness and generosity and wish them all the best for their future undertakings. We also remember and thank Rev. Fr. Kingsly Nonis who is not well at the moment.

We would also like to extend our gratitude and thanks to Mr. Claude De Laile for voluntarily helping our residents with morning exercises. Mr. Claude is a retired Naval Officer and we are very lucky to have acquired his services for our residents.

Let us pray for all those who need our prayers and for whom we have promised to pray. May God bless you all.

VILLA MARIA CHILAW

Greetings from Villa Maria.

As we stepped into the year 2017 our chaplain Rev. Fr. Valentine (OSB) celebrated Mass at midnight as well as in the morning. His community members Frs. Dushyantha and Suren, serving in a parish close by, joined him for lunch.

We were happy to welcome the two newly professed members to our congregation on the 4th January, at a festive celebration



Fr Valentine's 90th birthday celebration at Villa Maria

in which Srs. Rani, Beatrice and Primasha participated. The two finally professed sisters, Mercy and Jena, enjoyed the day, surrounded by their friends, relatives and the four communities. We were happy to be with them on this joyful occasion.

The 4th of February was the Feast day of Our Lady of Lanka and the independence day of Sri Lanka, which was celebrated as usual with a festive Mass and the hoisting of flags. Abbot Michael Kelly, the Abbot General of the Sylvestrine Benedictine monks paid us a visit along with Fr. Winston from India. They stayed overnight, concelebrated Mass the following morning and were happy to walk around enjoying the scenery until the Prior Shamindra Jayawardena came to take them to their next visiting place.

Srs. Kathy and Carmel, who arrived in Sri Lanka on Visitation, paid us a visit along with Sr. Heloise. After the Council meeting we welcomed Sr. Kanita from Melville to our community, thus increasing the community membership to six.

Fr. Valentine celebrated his 90th birthday on the 6th of March. The residents were happy to join him in prayers at the Eucharistic Celebration and also in the special meals prepared for them. Rev. Frs. Shamindra, Dushantha and Titus arrived at Villa Maria for dinner and for the rest of the birthday celebrations. Srs. Beatrice, Priyanga and Alexi participated at the follow up retreat session conducted by Fr. Mariyas S.J. at Lewella in March, and Srs. Primasha and Kanita did the same in April. Fr. Xystus, a very helpful supporter of our congregation, celebrated his 80th birthday at Ma-eliya and since he is not in very good health Srs. Rani and Kanita were invited to join him in prayers at Mass.

Lucian who celebrated his 70th birthday last year passed away after a long illness. The

community members as well as the staff did their best to make him comfortable during his final days.

Our Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis came to pay us a visit with some of his friends and spent time talking with his classmate Fr. Valentine. We thank him and our Prioress for the help and support they extend toward the success of our ministry.

As we are in the Easter season we wish you the joy of the Risen Lord and the power of resurrection in your life's journey.

GRACE & COMPASSION CONVENT MATTAKELLE

Greetings from Mattakelle in the name of Our Risen Lord.

We had a pleasant Christmas 2016 and a lovely Easter, prior to which we had lots of spiritual preparations. In December we bade farewell to 34 children going to primary school and some of them were able to go on to a Catholic school in town. We welcomed new comers to our preschool and arranged a programme for all the parents by SETIC, about child protection. At present we have 42 children from age 3 to 5. Some are waiting to enter in the second term. In February, we were able to celebrate our independence day, and parents together with teachers offered a meal for the children.

We were also very blessed with a visit from our Prioress General Sr. Kathy, the Vicarress Sr. Carmel and Prioress Sr. Heloise to our convent and preschool. The children were happy to welcome them and performed a few items, with the support of the teachers.

The people around this area are busy with



Sisters & children at Mattakelle

their tea plucking as there are so many tea leaves to be picked. April brings so much beauty to Nuwara Eliya, with many flowers in bloom.

Although we are still in the season of Easter, we are getting ready to start the second term for the preschool. With preparation for Pentecost, we hope and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide the church. Since this year is dedicated to St. Joseph Vaz, we are active in bringing back many dispersed Christians to the church especially by visiting the families and schools. We also had two new church openings by Rt. Rev. Bishop Joseph Vianny Fernando in two states. People are more prayerful and helpful in their daily activities in the churches.

Please remember us in your prayers. We wish all of you peace and grace in the Lord.

INDIA

GRACE & COMPASSION PRIORY TIRUVANNAMALAI

With such fast communication in this digital world, we hear about so many threats to human life - wars, droughts, earthquakes, migration in different parts of the world; and as Gaudium et spes says, we are entering “a new stage of history... a true cultural and social transformation” (4) in which “the human race is passing from a rather static concept of the order of things to a more dynamic, evolutionary one.” (5) As Benedictines, peace is the gift that we offer to our fragile world in the midst of so much turmoil. This can be done only when we have deep trust in the Lord who enables us to move forward with our daily chores and activities.

On the national front, we have droughts

in different states this summer, mainly due to the poor monsoon season last year. Consequently, we are feeling the heat more intensely. Our State of Tamil Nadu is also suffering the worst drought, and in addition there is confusion in the government as the ruling party is divided after the death of our Chief Minister.

The Community has been carrying out its various activities and we attended the Easter Liturgy as usual in the Parish; and having it in the open air enabled us to participate well in spite of the heat.

Sisters have been busy attending different courses and meetings, and some Sisters are doing studies in accountancy, pharmacy and nursing. Sr. Metilda attended the CIB Meetings in Lithuania in January and shared her experience with us. In March she attended the General Council Meeting in England. Sr. Amala has completed M.Th

in Biblical Theology and returned to the Community and Sr. Beula has finished her course in D. Pharm and is on a three months internship.

We said farewell to Srs. Virginia (moved to House of Peace), Victoria (Emmaus House, Pondicherry), Srs. Kulandai, Maggie and Jincy (St. Benedict's Convent, Adaiyur). We wish them well. Sr. Prema has been welcomed to our Community. Postulants Usha and Priya are with us for two months to gain more experience.

The Oblates weekend was held here on January 28 & 29. Sr. Lucy, the Oblate Mistress, escorted the ones who came from Nagercoil and Mrs. Amelia and Miss Pushpa joined them. It was a spiritual get-together, well organized with talks on Lectio, sacred music and history of the congregation which was delivered by a power-point presentation. The Divine Office was sung in



Oblates' visit to TV Malai Priory

Tamil whilst they were here to help them participate in the liturgy and to understand the depth of its message. This is their first visit to the Priory and they were thrilled to have been enriched by this weekend of participation in the community life.

A few of the Sisters attended St. Scholastica's Convent House Silver Jubilee as well as Sr. Ruth's and Sr. Molly's Silver Jubilee of First Profession. It was a great occasion. We were delighted to welcome Sr. Thaya, Superior at Montana, to our Community to see Sr. Flora. She stayed with us a fortnight.

There were quite a number of memorial Masses celebrated –and especially Mother Mary Garson's 10th Memorial Mass took place on 8 March 2017. Sisters from Adaiyur Community joined us and we gratefully remembered all that Mother had done for our mission and for the whole congregation. The 4th anniversary of Sr. Pauline's death was celebrated on 5th May, with the blessing of her grave, attended by some members of the family. Some Sisters attended our former Parish Priest Fr. Francis Xavier's (RIP) first death anniversary Mass which was held on 18 April 2017 in our parish.

A vocation camp was held at the end of April and 8 girls attended. Srs. Kulandai, Maggie and Punitha conducted the programme for them.

The construction of the compound wall for the convent and the field has now been completed. The fourth phase of renovation of the convent building is yet to be done.

The Sisters who underwent major surgery are slowly recuperating; please continue to keep them in your prayers. Please pray also that God will bless us with good rain.

Old Age Home:

The residents are settling well in their newly blessed home. The Chapel in the home is still to be decorated and furnished. Very sadly five of our residents (Mr. Irudayasamy, Miss Lalitha, Mr. Krishnan, Mrs. Unnamalai & Mrs. Savariammal) who had lived with us for some time passed away. Mrs. Savariammal had cancer and was placed for a little while at Jeevadaya Palliative Care Home for pain treatment - her body was brought here for burial.

Our residents have been keeping active with various programmes. They attended Senior Citizens Day at the Collectorate. The Rotary Club governor Mr. Natarajan visited the home and gave a sumptuous meal for all in January; they also conducted an eye camp on 13 February 2017.

The Vegan Lion Rotary Club installed a 50 litre drinking water system (reverse osmosis) which is a great help. The Red Cross members organized and conducted 'The World Health Day' and our residents attended it. We are grateful to all donors for their generosity.

Grace and Compassion Hospital:

Since the year started so much has been happening. We celebrated the 'World Sick Day' on 11.2.2017 with Holy Mass after which the blessing of all patients took place. Dr. Jayakumar took over the hospital as an administrator in March. We bade farewell to Sr. Maggie who had worked untiringly as an administrator over five years for the development of the hospital. We are thankful to her for all the services she has rendered. We welcome Sr. Prema who is working in the hospital.

We have been successful in obtaining the Chief Minister Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS) for those

OUR LADY OF LIGHT BANGALORE

patients who undergo dialysis, as well as those who are in need of free surgeries and medical treatment, the cost of which is remunerated by the government.

One of our staff members Mrs. Maria Elizabeth, who had been working with us for many years died unexpectedly and it was a great shock for us all. Please pray for the repose of her soul. She was adopted along with her brother by the late Fr. Capiaghi SDB who was instrumental in making our foundation in India. Her hard work, gentle smile and loyalty to the Sisters are greatly missed.

The new ambulance is being well used: we are grateful to all the donors for their generosity and kindness.

Crèche

At the time of this newsletter, the 25 children are all on their summer holidays until 1st June. We have started visiting families to recruit more children for the coming academic year in June 2017. We take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your kind and generous help.

PRE-FOUNDATIONS

Piravom: The new building work (St. Joseph's Home for the Aged) started in January 2016 is nearing completion. The blessing of the convent will take place in July 2017 and the old age home will be opened and blessed in October.

Ariyankuppam, Pondicherry: The foundation stone was blessed and laid on 27 December 2016 at Ariyankuppam where construction of the Priory is in progress.

Sahayapuram: There are 13 Oblates altogether, who come regularly to our Convent and join the Sisters for the Divine Office.

Greetings and prayerful wishes!

We are delighted to pen down the activities at Our Lady of Light. Primarily we take this opportunity to thank Sr. Jenita, for her fervent spirit and exemplary service for this house and welcome Sr. Seena. We wish both the outgoing and the incoming superiors all the best in their future undertakings.

It was a joyful occasion when our communities gathered for the twin celebration of the Silver Jubilee of St. Scholastica's Convent Makkiyad and the Silver Jubilee of Srs. Molly and Ruth on 9th February. The four candidates, who were studying PUC, finished their examination and went for holidays to their home in Odisha. Although their stay was temporary, their absence in the community is felt by the members. We hope it will be continued by another batch of young minds.

Taking care of the old with compassion, we believe, is our service to the Lord himself and in agreement with his dictum. At present there are three new senior citizens who have taken up residency here. Our house witnessed the glorious moment of abundant life when one of our residents, Miss Jessy Pereira turned centenarian on 9th February. We believe it is by God's grace and her will power as she herself says: "It is a surprise to me!" We wish her good health and happiness. To celebrate the remarkable milestone achieved by Jessy, the community joined in the high spirited centennial celebration with her family and friends.

To provide a high level of comfort to the residents, we have initiated the process to

renovate our senior citizens home. With the combined effort of our community and the generosity of the kind hearted benefactors we believe that it will reach its completion. With the approval of our Local Panjayath President, Mr. Chickuraj, we successfully connected our entire house drainage line to the public sewage treatment plant. Thus we became beneficiaries of Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board (**KUWSDB**) along with the local people. Although it involved a good amount of expenditure, the community felt that it was worth taking the opportunity to complete this project. The other issue our community faced was the scarcity of water which we solved by digging a bore well. Initially, we thought we would have to dig up to 800 feet but by the providence of God, by digging only 530 feet we were able to find a good source of water.

Sr. Arul Mary is currently convalescing at

Grace & Compassion Priory, Tiruvannamalai, following hip surgery at our hospital. We take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to Sr. Metilda and all the sisters who are taking care of her.

Over the past six months there have been occasions where we experienced the hand of God working through human agents. We will always remain grateful to all those who are supporting us in various ways.

ST BENEDICT'S ADAIYUR

We wish you all the joy and peace of Eastertide!

There are eleven sisters, all Finally Professed, in our community. In March we said farewell to Sr. Prema, who is now settled at the Priory and working in our



Miss Jessie Pereira's 100th birthday at Bangalore

hospital. In April we welcomed three sisters, all from the Priory, Srs Kulandai, Maggie and Jincy. They are all teaching in our nursing school. They accompany our students to Grace Hospital and Government Hospital for their clinical postings.

Whilst writing this newsletter, we cannot fail to mention the prevailing summer heat in India this year. The water level in our two open wells has gone down incredibly. Having so many students living with us we are really in need of water and we are surviving on water from the bore well. Everyone is on their knees for a solid downpour!

Farm:

The construction work on the compound wall around the field is now completed and work is in progress on the deepening of a well. Due to scarcity of water we have had to harvest the sugarcane in both fields before its due time, even though it means a great loss for us. Mango fruits have been sold out on lease. Our farm still produces bananas, lemons, water melon, guava, musambi and some vegetables, but they are in dire need of water. Our cows and goats are doing well in our dairy farm.

School of Nursing:

We are blessed with four sisters as nursing tutors, who help our students with their required procedures. The farewell for the VIII batch was held on 4th February. The students were sad to leave the Institute but at the same time they were happy to go forward in their professions. At the end of March our 1st and 2nd years went to Amalarakkini Blind School for field visiting and they were really touched by the talents and affection of the children. It also motivated our students to be generous towards the needy.

Let us pray for each other that God may shower his blessings on us.

HOUSE OF PEACE YERCAUD

In the name of the Risen Lord, we send our greetings to you all.

The work on the new water storage tank is now complete, and we have stored the harvested rain water, to use during the summer season. But unfortunately, 1000 litres of water evaporates every day because of the excessive heat. This year, because of the lack of seasonal monsoon, the whole country is suffering from drought and excessive heat. This situation brings many deaths among the farmers and animals, and we pray to Almighty God to look down with mercy and shower blessings of rain to all the affected areas of the country.

The new law of Demonetization of these two currencies (1000 and 500 notes) has brought untold suffering to the ordinary citizens of this country. As a result the flow of guests to the house is very low, but as May is the holiday season, a group of guests came and enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere of the surroundings. They come from a variety of backgrounds, customs, and beliefs and they admire our way of life and are thankful for our service.

We welcome Sr. Rosamma, as a new member of the community, to assist Sr. Kiruba with the formation; may God grant her the necessary blessing to meet the challenges in her new ministry.

We celebrated the 10th death anniversary of our founder Mother Mary Garson, and we pray that her departed soul may rest in the light of Christ.



Sisters & candidates at House of Peace, Yercaud

Candidates Usha and Priya went to the Priory house for two months to get community experience.

Sr. Jovitha is in her final year of her preparation for her Final Vows, so she is attending various courses and talks to enable her to say Yes to God for life.

Sr. Kiruba has successfully finished her 3 years formation in-service course, at AVP Carmelaram in Bangalore. Also, Sr. Mathalene finished her MIC course which is organized by the India and Sri Lanka Benedictine Federation.

We were so happy to see Srs. Thaya and Flora for a day visit; it was a happy day for all of us.

We wish you all a pleasant summer.

ST SCHOLASTICA'S CONVENT MAKKIYAD

Greetings from St. Scholastica's Convent. We are very happy to share our joy and God's blessings which we all experienced during our Jubilee celebration.

The sweet sound of Jubilee bells had been ringing at St. Scholastica's Convent, Makkiyad, for a long time. It began on 9th February 2016 on the feast of St. Scholastica when this community began the spiritual preparation of celebrating the jubilee of the foundation of the convent in Kerala, which would take place on 9th February 2017. The initiative had been taken by Sr. Metilda, the Prioress, and special daily prayers to St. Scholastica were offered, together with weekly adoration and monthly spiritual nourishment talks for the sisters. As spiritual preparation deepened, material preparations were also taking shape in the

form of small donations from our residents, our staff and well-wishers.

Coincidentally, we had two sisters Ruth and Molly, who were celebrating their jubilees during 2017. This realisation was a double joy and the council meeting decided to include them in the jubilee celebration of the foundation.

A few days before the celebration the Jubilarian sisters arrived, together with sisters and guests from India and abroad. We were delighted to have our pioneer sisters and the presence of our dear friends, Dr. David and Dr. Susan and Catherine and Mike from England for the special occasion. It set the jubilee pulse in the house racing. The large canopies and the stage for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist were set up and the artistic hands of our sisters arranged flowers and greenery around the stage. The catering services began their preparation for the festive meal and the aroma of the cooking spread throughout

the convent. Some of our residents and visitors participated in decorating the driveway.

The Jubilee day arrived and the lovely singing of the birds and the divine praise of the sisters woke everyone with prayer and bliss. There was a surprise short visit by one of the renowned personalities of the Benedictine family, Abbot John Kurichiyaniyil OSB along with one of his priests Fr. Bibin OSB. This indeed was a happy occasion. As planned, we were all ready by 10am and we stood in the front courtyard of the house to welcome guests. It was a lovely sight when the chief celebrant Rt Rev Dr Varghese Chakkalackal, Bishop of Calicut, arrived at 10.25. Srs. Metilda, Anita, Ruth and Molly welcomed him with a garland and a bouquet.

Well-wishers, visitors and guests lined both sides of the driveway while the student festal band led the procession of 25 St. Scholastica staff with their colourful uniform saris holding lighted lamps, followed by 8



Silver Jubilee of Srs Ruth & Molly at Makkiyad



St Scholastica's Convent, Makkiyad

flower girls. The hostel children showered flowers as carpets. We all proceeded up to the Eucharistic celebration area in a joyful yet solemn manner. The most senior sisters of the congregation placed 25 roses on the lamp which had been decorated with greenery. The lamp was lit and with this the Holy Eucharist for the Jubilee began with its entrance hymn.

The Holy Mass was so solemn and the harmonious melody by the seminarian brothers was deep and soothing. After Mass Srs. Ruth and Molly were invited on to the stage and presented with their mementos. It was such a silent and blissful moment that everybody sat so still, and then a roar of clapping rose in the air.

Then it was time for the photos, after which individual guests were called out to the dais to be honoured. We really missed our Prioress General Sr. Kathy at this time. All these personalities were given a bouquet, and a shawl was put over them by our own sisters.

The next item on the programme was

cutting the cake. The three-tier white jubilee cake was decorated with coloured roses and it was a beautiful sight to behold. As this came to an end the dignitaries took their seats back in the congregation ready for the Rangapuja, a beautiful prayer dance performed by the Vanjode parish students. This was followed by felicitations by Rev Fr. Anselm and others. Finally, Sr. Anita, the superior of St. Scholastica, thanked everyone and Srs. Ruth and Molly jointly expressed their thanks.

Everyone enjoyed and commented on the excellent festive meal of carefully prepared dishes of Kerala. After the meal the Bishop and the sisters' families began to leave, and by this time it was nearly 3.30pm, the visiting sisters themselves gathered in the refectory. Sr. Metilda thanked Sr. Anita and the community for their meticulous planning and hard work to ensure such a joyous and happy occasion. Everyone said goodbye to each other and we all agreed that it was indeed a memorable day in the history of the Grace and Compassion Congregation in India.

AFRICA

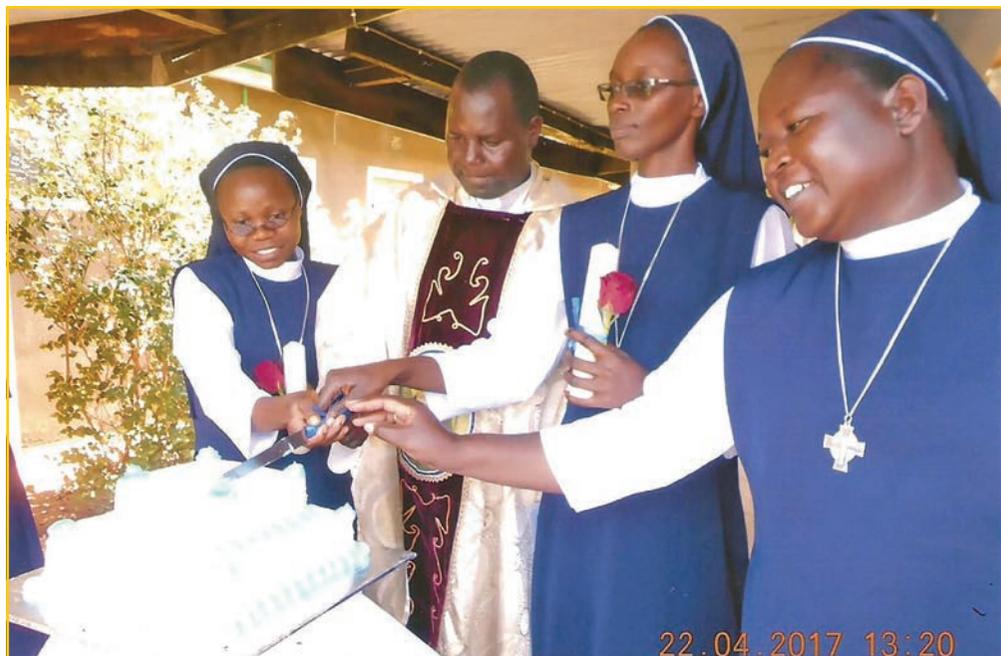
GRACE & COMPASSION CONVENT MUNDIKA

May the peace of Christ be with you. We had a joyful Easter, all of the sisters, workers and residents had a delicious lunch together. It was nice to have our sisters who are away on studies joining us for Easter.

This year, we have had joyous celebrations. In March, we celebrated the 10th death anniversary of our Foundress Mother Mary Garson. We were very grateful to start this special ceremony with a day of recollection prior to the anniversary day. Fr. Mathew from the Benedictine Monastery in Tororo gave us a very enriching recollection. This day reminded us of the work Mother Mary

Garson began many years ago and the impact it has had. It made us recall where we have come from, where we are and where we would like to be. We had Mass at 11.00am in our St. Gabriel's Chapel, followed by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for the whole day.

We take this chance to welcome our newly initiated Novices Sr. Faustina Bafaki and Sr. Emmanuelina Tumwekwase into our community. How wonderful it is to see the young ones joining our congregation! It gives us hope of continuity. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Sr. Philister Ochieng and Sr. Eliza Ogola who made their first profession on 22nd April 2017. Being the first profession, the celebration comprised of the sisters, our residents, our workers and a few family members of the professing sisters. It was simple but wonderful.



First Profession of Srs Philister & Eliza at Mundika



New Novices Srs Faustina & Emmanuelina at Mundika

GRACE & COMPASSION CONVENT CHEBUKAKA

Dear readers,

Receive cordial greetings from Chebukaka and we welcome you to this issue of Our Lady's Newsletter. It is Easter Monday as we write this and we do hope each one of you had a very joyous Easter as we did here. We had our afternoon Holy Thursday Mass at 3:00pm to begin the triduum celebrations. Friday morning set the tone for the next few days when we began the Stations of the Cross at the parish church at 8:00am to reflect on how the crucifixion of Jesus was continuing in our world today. Each station was done by a different small Christian community. Vigil Mass began just after sunset due to insecurity in the area.

Plans to set up a new polytechnic are still underway. We thank you for your support which enabled the extension of our rooms, which were completed early December last year. May God reward and bless you. The field now looks green with the onset of the rain but our bore hole is still dry. The water shortage remains a major challenge which has compelled us to buy water on a daily basis.

On the eve of Mother's 10th death anniversary (7th March) thieves broke into our compound for the fifth time. This time, the drama began exactly at midnight. Luckily enough our two security guards were on their toes and spotted one of the intruders. This led to a great marathon race between one of the guards and the gangster who had been spotted. Unfortunately, during the race the guard lost his balance and fell. His spot-light was damaged and left him in the pitch-dark. This marked the end of the

We always look forward to our annual meetings. In April 2017, the finally professed Sisters had their meeting here in Mundika. It was nice to have our sisters from Uganda, Nairobi and Chebukaka communities join us for the meeting. Sr. Immaculate Nakato from Sisters of Mary Reparatrix gave us a very inspiring talk.

Our residents are all doing well. We are sad to inform you that in February this year we lost our resident John Oliechi (RIP), who had been the chairman of the residents for the last five years. He carried out various activities as chairman, was a strict and responsible man. He was a counsellor to the group and a good traditional dancer. He is missed by many. May he rest in peace.

The outreach program is also doing well. Life has been very difficult for the old people, due to the drought that hit the western part of Kenya from December 2016 to March this year. The little food we usually give them once a month could not sustain them for the whole month. They have been forced to come twice a month. Last year the harvest was very poor due to insufficient rains. As if that was not bad enough, this year we have been invaded by army worms. They destroyed all the crops leaving the people wondering what next! The old peoples' crops were not spared either. We tried to spray the crops with insecticide but it was all in vain.

We take this opportunity to thank all our friends and benefactors who have supported us morally, spiritually, materially or financially. May God bless you for your generosity.

race and the gangster managed to escape with his lot. The thieves had cut the chain-link fence of our compound. The matter was reported to the police and a statement recorded. Eventually they came to survey the site and took photos where they had cut the chain-link fence and arrested the suspect. Every night as we retire we surrender everything to God before going to sleep.

Pope Francis' message at Easter Mass reminds us that to be happy is to have a sky without storms, road without accidents, and work without fatigue. Being happy is not only valuing the smile, but also reflecting on sadness. In his speech he emphasized that life is worth living despite all challenges, misunderstanding and periods of crisis. To be happy is to thank God every morning for the miracle of life.

Thank you all for your support and please continue to pray for us here in Kenya to

have a peaceful general election to be held 8th August 2017.

GRACE & COMPASSION CONVENT IRUNDU AND JINJA

Greetings from Irundu and Jinja communities.

It is good to recall the past few months from January to April. We had a very dry season. The climate was very hot and the lovely green fields dried up. When it started raining, we planted crops like maize, although some were destroyed by the army worm. Through God's mercy, by the end of April the rains returned and now things are getting back to normal and our livestock are doing well.

On 8th March 2017, we had a prayerful celebration of the 10th anniversary of our beloved Mother Mary Garson's death,



First intake of pupils at our new nurse school, Jinja

which was preceded by a novena. On 8th December 2016, we had the first graduation ceremony of our early childhood education and development pupils. The top class managed to give us a smile. Everybody got involved, sisters, teachers, graduates, their parents and non-teaching staff. This encouraged the community and at the beginning of the new academic year 2017, the school enrolment was very encouraging. Last year, our school was the best in the whole district in the Ugandan National Primary Leaving Examination. We pray for even more improvement.

Here in Jinja community we also celebrated the 10th anniversary of our Mother Mary Garson. Special prayers were offered on her behalf with the Blessed Sacrament being

exposed in our chapel. The sisters took turns in offering prayers for her soul and we concluded with the sacrifice of holy Mass. May her soul rest in peace.

On 30th January 2017, we had a special blessing for the official opening of our new nursery school. We have 31 pupils and 4 teachers. The school is doing well and we are expecting more children next term. One of our teachers graduated on 5th May.

On 27th April, we were blessed with a visit from our Prioress General. We are very grateful for her advice and encouragement. May Almighty God continue to bless her. We also welcomed Sandra O'Reilly and we are very happy that she has come to help us for a few months.

Matthew

His lips said "Follow me", but in His eyes
I saw the light of love eternal shine.
The busy world around I heard no more
As to his outstretched hand I lifted mine.
The table where I sat was rich with coin,
Piled high with ledgers for the taxes paid.
Despised was I, and scorned by fellow Jews,
An outcast while I plied a hated trade.
Yet, "Follow me" He said. And smiled. And I
Could nothing do but answer to His call.
I rose and left security behind,
Small price to pay when Love could give me all.

Christine Roe

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The Benedictine Sisters of Our Lady of Grace & Compassion

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