

YRe, 24 is from Kontum in the Central Highlands of Vietnam where she lives with her husband and extended family. She is a member of the Kontum Women's Union Credit Program which has been supported by Caritas Australia since 1998.

Like many other ethnic minority women Y Re received a low level of education, leaving school when she was ten years old to work in the fields, helping her family grow enough food to survive. She and her husband share 1.5 hectares of land with her extended family where they all work together to plant two crops per year. They grow rice, corn and cassava.

The aim of the credit program is to improve the living conditions of ethnic minority women in Kontum by providing them with loans for income generating activities. The program also offers workshops to help the women manage their finances. They are provided with basic book keeping skills and taught how to calculate, save and spend their money efficiently.

One of the regulations of the program is that members must attend a monthly group meeting. These meetings allow women the opportunity to come together to exchange ideas and experiences. Women learn from each other on issues such as hygiene, health, agricultural techniques and animal husbandry. This interaction encourages solidarity among members as they share experiences and help each other during difficulties.

In October 2004 Y Re borrowed \$83 (approx \$1 million Vietnam dong). Although eligible for a loan of \$167 (approx \$2 million dong) Y Re only accessed this much as she was anxious about borrowing such a large sum of money.

Like the majority of women in her community, Y Re used her loan to buy pigs. She bought ten piglets for \$83 (approx \$1 million dong) which she then fattened for six months and sold

for \$418 (approx \$5 million dong), gaining a profit of \$335 (approx \$4 million dong). In October 2005 she repaid the loan.

Y Re felt very happy when she sold the pigs and made a profit. She feels confident to take out further loans to buy pigs and fatten them up for sale so she and her husband can grow more crops and one day send their children to school.

At the time of writing, Y Re was three months pregnant with their first child. Y Re's dream for her children is that they will be able to go to school to learn how to read, write and do basic mathematics in order to assert themselves and avoid being taken advantage of in the marketplace. She would like to have a baby girl for her first child and a boy for her second – as Vietnam has a two child policy.

Y Re's hope for the future is to succeed in her business growing rice and cassava. In the future, she and her husband would like to have their own house for their new family.

Taking a loan with the Women's Union has changed Y Re's life for the better. She likes going to the group meetings as she can meet others who are also taking out loans and share business as well as personal experiences with them. She feels she can overcome the difficulties in her life with help from others in the group.

Your donation to Project Compassion will allow communities like Y Re's to become self-reliant and look forward to a more productive future.



Coffs Harbour Parish Centenary Celebrations by Rosemary Doherty

The Centenary Mass at St Augustine's Church, Coffs Harbour, took place on Saturday, December 9, 2006.

The principal celebrant was Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett, who concelebrated with 17 priests, including Fathers John Dacey, Peter Slack, David Gilbey, Paul Gooley and Garry Hayes, who were ordained to the Priesthood in Coffs Harbour.

The Mass was a joyous occasion commencing with the magnificent sounds of brass, tympani, trumpets, French horn, organ and a 50 voice choir ringing out "The Old Hundredth" as the celebrants entered the Church. The choir was conducted by Kathleen Coombs, with organist Judy Brooks and Greg Ellsmore, writer of the brass arrangements.

Many Religious Sisters and former parishioners returned to Coffs Harbour for the weekend. Sister Veronica McCluskie represented the Good Samaritan Order, who taught in the town from 1913 – 1972. Sister Anne Hughes represented the Sisters of Mercy, who came to the parish in 1973 and still retain a presence.

Bishop Jarrett in his homily said: "We have come together in joyful commemoration of the day, when the first Bishop of the Diocese, Jeremiah Doyle, sent to the Catholic people of Coffs Harbour, Father Charles O'Gallagher. From the seed thus sown, nurtured by the grace of God, flourishing in the faith of its 13 pastors, a succession of over 50 assistant priests, some 135 religious Sisters of the Good Samaritan and the Sisters of Mercy, all borne along by a magnificent laity – the seed has grown to become this great tree, one of the largest parishes in the diocese, bearing vigorous witness to the truth of Christ our Lord, spreading wide its branches in the embrace of the human community in which it is set."

30 relatives of Father Charles O'Gallagher attended the weekend celebrations. Sister Yvonne Channells, RSM, a great



niece, read at the Mass. General Intercessions were read by Sister Sybil Colborne RSM, Cath Gooley and Bernie Cleaver. The Gifts were brought to the Altar by Sandy Betts, Mollie Goodenough, Lena Borsato, Joanne Caba and 96 year old George Passlow, who was an Altar boy in the early 1920s.

Following the Mass, Father Paul McDonald, assisted by Frank Kennedy, planted a Wollemi pine, the tree representing a symbol of longevity. Mrs Josie Alford, a niece of the first priest, cut the ribbon to open the centenary Historical Display. A luncheon followed at the Catholic Club where the centenary cake was cut by Colleen Cutmore and Agnes Castle. On Sunday December 8, the former Karangi Church was opened for visitors. A book titled Catholic Parish Coffs Harbour 1906 – 2006 was written by Rosemary Doherty assisted by Carmel Woldseth and Agnes Castle. The Parish Schools' namely John Paul College, St Augustine's and St Francis Xavier celebrated the centenary by making a pilgrimage to the Parish Church on Friday, December 8, for Masses.

Father Paul McDonald, parish priest, stated: "The Centenary celebrations were a wonderful and fitting way of honouring this great milestone in the history of the parish of Coffs Harbour."



Our Country Churches



by David Billington

www.cathchurch.net/historic.html

St Therese, Coramba

On August 22, 1921 the Catholic residents of Coramba, a small mining town in the hills behind Coffs Harbour approached Bishop Carroll with a petition pledging themselves 'to bear the financial burden of purchasing and erecting thereon a Church as soon as permission is obtained.' Five years later land was duly purchased from the Coramba Dairy Society Butter Factory and on November 28 1926 the Foundation Stone of St Therese's Church was laid.

The site of the church was an awkward one as it dropped steeply from the main road. As a result the church had to be raised on stilts which are clearly visible from the side but virtually invisible from the main entrance. The church was a substantial country church of its time with twin sacristies and an apsidal East end correctly oriented towards the



rising sun, ancient symbol of the Risen Christ.

At the time of its opening in March 1927 the Coffs Harbour Advocate referred to it as a 'triumphal day for the Roman Catholic community at Coramba.'

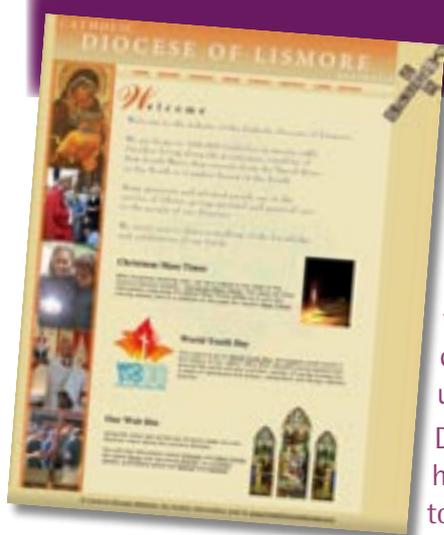
The church itself was described as 'lofty and well ventilated with a well-pitched roof. Its construction is of hardwood with windows



of stained glass. The furnishings and fittings are in keeping with the building which is lined with Dorriggo plum... One of the features is the outlook from the church over the beautiful Orana

Valley, the green flats in the foreground and the hills in the distance.'

In the same month as the laying of the Foundation Stone, Coramba along with the church at Karangi became a separate parish of Coramba-Karangi a status that was to last until 1935. Since then Coramba has been an active station of Coffs Harbour parish. The church has of course seen many changes over the years but still sits serenely enjoying the same beautiful outlook as the day it was opened eighty years ago this month.



New Website for Diocese

The Lismore Diocese has a new website:
www.lismorediocese.org

The website, produced by NTech Media is a comprehensive source of information about the diocese, its schools and parishes, personnel, Mass times, news, links to other websites, contacts, welfare agencies in the diocese, facilities for aged care, retreat centres, upcoming events and media releases. "Catholic Life" is also on the website.

Daily bible readings and prayer reflections are also available. Liturgy notes and an historical gallery are soon to be added. Any inclusions for the website can be emailed to Fr. Peter Karam at the Media Office: media@lismorediocese.org

Grafton Celebrates 175 Mercy Years by Sister Colleen Rhodes, rsm

As we gathered to celebrate 175 years since the Sisters of Mercy were founded in Dublin, Ireland and 25 years since the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia was established.

Representatives from ministries in which the Sisters have worked in the Lismore diocese – parishes, schools, aged care facilities, residential care for children and young people – processed into the church. They carried with them cards on which participants and others who could not come had recorded their reasons to be grateful for Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy.

Barbara Bolster, Congregation Leader, welcomed all to the celebration. Fr Dennis Carroll, VG, acknowledged the Bundjalung and Gumbainggirr people whose lands are bordered by the Clarence River. Seventeen priests gathered around the altar and several hundred Sisters, Associates, ex-students, colleagues and friends joined to celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving for the life of Catherine McAuley. Institute Vice-President, Caroline Ryan rsm was a special guest. Another welcome friend was John Hamilton from Casino. John's grandmother went to school at Baggot Street in the late 1800's.

A very moving part of the celebration was a reflection by Sister Rosemary Carroll

A very moving part of the celebration was a reflection by Sister Rosemary Carroll, Executive Officer of Mercy Works Incorporated. Rosie, who was previously Director of Mercy International Centre, spoke of Catherine, her vision and charism. She also described her recent visit to East Timor on behalf of Mercy Works. With Catherine's heart Sister Rosie saw and heard told the poverty and need of the East Timorese people. She reminded the congregation of the words of the prophet Habbukuk: "the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfilment and will not disappoint." (Hab. 2:2) "However," she assured us, "we can only press on to its fulfilment if we collaborate with our associates and colleagues. Only if we can harness the resources of all those who desire to be part of a humanitarian effort, will we have en fleshed the vision once again and bring relief to our sisters and brothers in places such as East Timor."

After the Mass, most of those present stayed to enjoy a picnic lunch.

Bill Dougherty from Grafton spoke of the presence and ministry of the Sisters of Mercy in Grafton and Isobel



(At left) Sr. Caroline Ryan, Vice President of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia, PNG & Pakistan & Congregational Leader Sr. Barbara Bolster



Brown from Kempsey recorded their work on the Macleay. Sister Barbara Bolster invited all to reflect on the needs of our world, suggesting that we might ponder the cosmic dimensions calling for compassion today. Just as Catherine imagined new ways of responding to need, so Sisters of Mercy and their associates, colleagues and friends are invited to be the compassionate imagination in our world. Barbara observed that after responding with a story, Jesus told the lawyer inquiring who he should treat as neighbour, to "observe what the Good Samaritan had done and to do

Arriving in Grafton on 24th January, 1884 the nine sisters under the leadership of Mother Stanislaus Simpson

likewise." Our challenge, she reflected, is to imagine what 'likewise' looks like in our region of the world today.

Arriving in Grafton on 24th January, 1884 the nine sisters under the leadership of Mother Stanislaus Simpson quickly became involved in the life of the district travelling from Grafton to the outlying stations and then establishing communities in parishes throughout the diocese.

Their work included:

- teaching in schools, • prison ministry,
- caring for children at Cowper orphanage,
- instructing children in the faith,
- visitation • visiting families,
- developing the arts – particularly in the area of music,
- as pastoral associates, • in houses of prayer,
- retreat and conference centres.
- Today ministries have extended to counselling, therapy, retreat direction, pastoral care, consultancy, CCD – once again responding to need wherever it is found.

In many cases the sisters are no longer present and the foundational work done by them is carried on by many wonderful lay people.

Along the Clarence River the sisters served and continue to serve in:

- South Grafton • Cowper
- Maclean • Yamba
- Ulmarra • Harwood

In 1887 they moved out to the Richmond River and communities formed in:

- Casino • Tatham



- Mallanganee
- South Casino
- Bonalbo
- Kyogle

In 1900 it was to the Macleay River that the Sisters extended their work. To Kempsey and then Smithtown

1951 saw an expansion to the Nambucca River

- Bowraville
- Macksville
- Nambucca Heads

1965 and the sisters moved to the city establishing a house in Stanmore

In 1972 there was a call from Coffs Harbour and then Dorrigo followed closely by Bayldon/Sawtell and then Woolgoolga.

In 1992 the call to Centacare in Port Macquarie was answered.

Throughout our history in the diocese the sisters have taught Aboriginal children, visited their families and helped train Aboriginal people to be ministers in their own community.

In 1977 this became a special focus with the development of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in the diocese.

Since 1991 sisters have moved into the northern part

of the diocese – to Wardell, Alstonville, Bangalow, Goonellabah, Evans Head, Lennox Head. To the diocese of Broome at Balgo, to the Wollongong Diocese at Douglas Park, the Canberra – Goulburn diocese, to the Northern Territory at Nhulunbuy and to the Armidale diocese in Tenterfield.

The call to serve in ‘foreign lands’ was also answered: The descendants of that band of nine women who came to a ‘foreign’ land from England moved out to:

- PNG
- Zimbabwe
- Refugee Camps in Malaysia and Vietnam
- Kenya
- Pakistan

We have even gone back to Dublin and worked in Catherine’s house.

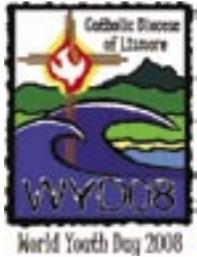
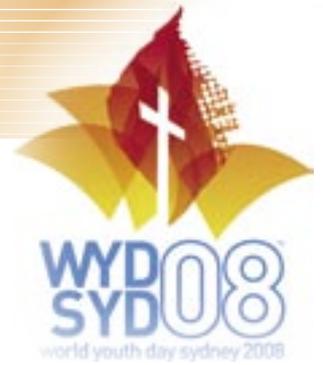
As ministries were taken up and others left the words of Catherine have remained with us –

“We have one solid comfort amidst this tripping about our hearts can always be in the same place centred in God from whom alone we go forward or stay back.”



The year 1900

"World Youth Day is coming to you!"



The national tour of the WYD Cross and Icon will go through every diocese, in every state, in Australia. This will be your chance to feel the spirit of WYD, to add your own steps and prayers to the 21 year-long pilgrimage of young people who have carried these symbols of Christ's love for humanity in every corner of the world.

by Adam Sullivan – Executive Officer WYD – Diocese of Lismore

This will be an amazing opportunity for all ages to experience the WYD spirit. Parishes and schools across the Diocese of Lismore are now in the early stages of preparing for this fantastic event.

The Journey of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon (JCI) is the major preparatory event for World Youth Day 2008 (WYD). It is a powerful instrument for the evangelization and catechesis of young people prior to WYD. The Cross and Icon will be present at events in churches and public places throughout our diocese this year, from its arrival in Laurieton on the 31st of July to its departure on the 7th of August in Tweed Heads. Lismore will be amongst the earliest Australian dioceses to receive the World Youth Day Cross and Icon.

There has been an overwhelming response to the coming of the JCI, with parishes and schools keen to be actively involved, whether that being as a hosting parish or as a guest parish.

While there are 29 parishes in our Diocese, unfortunately the 8 day itinerary only permits 15 timetabled events across the diocese. In this case, individual parishes have been asked to play host to others for this important part of the JCI.

Hosting parishes are now in the preparation stages of organising events for their own region. The logistics of smoothly connecting the parish-based events is being guided by the Diocesan JCI sub-committee who will support parish based planning committees made up from each of the hosting parishes. Hosting parishes will be responsible for planning the events in terms of how to greet the WYD Cross and Icon and what sort of ceremony or celebration they'll have.

On top of the parish based events, three major events will take place in our diocese. The first, incorporating the southern half of our diocese, which will take place at Trial Bay. The second will be in Lismore and will be an opportunity to co-celebrate the arrival of the Cross and Icon as well as celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of our Cathedral. The final major event will take place at Byron Bay, incorporating the northern half of

our diocese.

The Journey of the Cross and Icon through our Diocese will prove a great opportunity to strengthen ties between all church communities. Parishes welcome the overwhelming response from schools as parishes organise a meaningful faith experience of the JCI for their parishioners and wider community.

Contact your local Catholic Parish or School to find out how you can be part of this amazing event.

More about the Cross and Icon

The World Youth Day Cross is the most significant tangible symbol of World Youth Day. Originally the idea of Pope John Paul 11, the 3.8 metre high wooden Cross was built and placed as a symbol of the Catholic faith, near the main altar in St Peter's Basilica during the Holy Year of 1983. At the end of that year, Pope John Paul gave this cross as a gift to the youth of the world, to be carried through the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity.

"My dear young people, at the conclusion of the Holy Year, I entrust to you the sign of this Jubilee Year: the Cross of Christ! Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity and announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ can we find salvation and redemption." His Holiness Pope Jean Paul II, Rome, 22 April 1984.

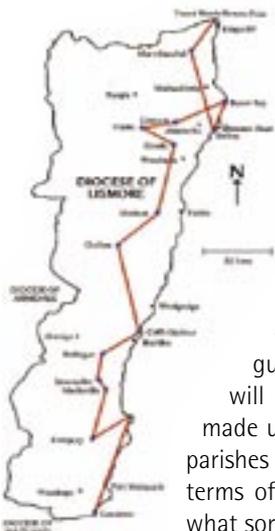
Since then, the World Youth Day cross has travelled far and wide – it has been throughout Europe, the United States, Canada, South America and The Philippines, to Poland and Prague, to the German Parliament and even to Ground Zero in New York. It has been carried by commercial airline, light aircraft, dog sled, pick-up truck, tractor, sail boat, fishing boat and on shoulders. From parish churches to youth detention centres, prisons, schools, universities, national historic sites, shopping centres, nightclub districts and parks. It is truly an international symbol for Catholic youth.

The Icon of our Lady

On Palm Sunday in 2003, the Pope introduced a new element for WYD: from then on, the WYD Cross would be accompanied on its pilgrimage by the Icon of Our Lady, Salus Populi Romani.

"Today I also entrust to the delegation from Germany the Icon of Mary. From now on it will accompany the World Youth Days,

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St Joseph's Regional, Port Macquarie Opening School Liturgy

St Joseph's Regional celebrated the opening of the 2007 school year with a liturgy at St Agnes Parish. The celebration focused on the school theme "Dare to be Extraordinary". Students from each Pastoral Care class brought forward a picture of someone they considered to be "extraordinary". Some of these significant people who act as role models in our own lives were, Mother Theresa, Fr Chris Riley, Nelson Mandela, Dr Fiona Wood. Fr. Paul Gooley lead the service with readings and prayers that focused on the need for courage to be an extraordinary person and emphasizing that with God's help we can reach those goals.

Amelia Charlton & Thomas Finnerty

and induct the school leaders for 2007. The school captains from 2006 Cassie Steinmetz and Matthew Hedge passed on the school candle that represents the light of Christ onto the new school captains Nicholas Maxwell and Kimberley McKenna.

Badges were presented to the other school leaders. Each house leader presented their theme for the year that encouraged students to fully participate in all that the Regional school has to offer. The celebration concluded with a special blessing by Fr Paul and a unique rendition of "I'm a Believer".

St Joseph's Primary, Coraki Grand Opening

No doubt about the students at St. Joseph's Coraki but they can be a whinging, whining lot...well at least they were for a while on Friday 23rd of February. It was an exciting day for the students as it saw the official opening of their new multi-purpose outdoor learning area.



Mr Ian Causley, Member for Page with School Leaders Tara Cooper and Aiden O'Brien & Sports Captains Nikayla Wells and Alex Powell.

Students prepared a performance to mark the occasion, which reflected how grateful they were to have the undercover area built. In order to show the extent of their gratitude they had to portray how difficult it had been without one, hence the whingeing and whineing.

The performance saw the students running and playing in the heat (which they didn't really mind) and then trying to concentrate in class after play (lots of yawning and not much energy). The performance then saw students restricted to the classroom for play on rainy days (they described the teachers as being full of gloom, gloom, gloom when this happened).

The performance piece concluded with the whole school singing and dancing to a specially rewritten "Greased Lightning" track entitled "Undercover Area" which included the lines...

"So thanks to all those people who helped to build this place
We really appreciate what it's done for our space".

A plaque acknowledging the Federal Government' funding of the air conditioning and outdoor area, under the Investing in our Schools Grant, was unveiled by Mr Ian Causley, Member for Page. Certificates of appreciation were given to the contractors who managed to complete the work without interruption to classes.

St Joseph's College, Banora Point "Good Intentions Over Time"

"We often think that beginnings are hard. Not so. Beginnings are easy. It is carrying good intentions over time that is the real test."

Members of the St Joseph's College community and over 170 new enrolments were greeted with the words resounding in the challenge issued by the College Principal, Mr Peter McLoughlin, in his opening address and welcome at the Commencement Mass on Monday the 12th February 2007. Parents, students and staff were encouraged to take heed of the theme of the Mass; an invitation to the congregation to Sing A New Song.

We welcome all new students and staff to the college and acknowledge the timely return of Mrs Louise McLaughlin to the Music Department. Her return was clearly evidenced with the resounding melodies echoing from the voices participating in the College choir during the Mass.

Year 12 students received their journey candles and were presented to the College as part of their rite of passage into the start of their final year. The congregation joined to pray for their success in the coming year and will continue to do so throughout the year ahead.

The journey begins with the first step and the ability to continue one step at a time to reach a destination. It is the need for consistency over time with the realisation that the Holy Spirit is with us all the way as in the Road to Emmaus, that allows us as the community of St Joseph's College to take up the challenge to carry good intentions over time.

When the going gets tough and we want to get going, to quit, to pull up stumps it is in those moments when the words of our father need to resonate most and call us back to the task at hand knowing we are not alone.

A new song alone is nothing without the harmonies and melodies of the congregation, the community. At St Joseph's College we invite all to raise their voices together in harmony and sing a new song accepting each individuals; endeavours, achievements, courage, convictions, wisdom, decisions and the peace that is achieved through the collectives just action.



On a number of occasions Jesus came in contact with people who had experienced difficulties in their married life.

For example the woman at the well who had been married 5 times and the woman caught in adultery just to cite two instances. In each of these encounters Jesus showed them understanding and compassion. He talked from his heart to them and in one case (the woman married 5 times) he revealed who he really was – the Messiah. Rather than shun them or turn them away or embarrass or ostracize them our Lord empathised with them.

In another instance, Mark 10:2-16, those who wished to test and embarrass Jesus, namely the Pharisees, questioned him about divorce. Divorce was part of the Jewish culture from the time of Moses. The Pharisees therefore must have heard a rumour that Jesus did not approve of divorce. So the purpose of questioning him about divorce was to get Jesus to admit that he did not approve of divorce thus embarrassing Jesus in the sight of the people and giving the Pharisees the opportunity of accusing Jesus of contradicting Moses, the great law giver. Jesus simply replies that the law of God must be kept.

In marriage God answered the human need for friendship, companionship, closeness, warmth and love – all God given human needs. When people are married they bring to that union not only their strengths but also their weaknesses. Each and every one of us is vulnerable to sin and selfishness. I have been told that to get married is to enter the school of love, a school in which we are all slow learners.

While a couple make a bond on their wedding day it is a bond that is made by two human beings and therefore, vulnerable to human frailty. The only truly unbreakable bond is the one that God has with us through Christ.

With our human frailty and marriage and divorce in mind the church states the following: The church does not abandon those who have remarried after a divorce. She prays for them and encourages them in the difficulties that they encounter in the spiritual life, sustaining them in faith and in hope. For their part, these persons, insofar as they are baptized, can and indeed must participate



in the life of the church. They are exhorted to listen to the word of God, to attend the sacrifice of the mass, to persevere in prayer, to perform acts of charity and take part in community projects for justice and peace, to raise their children in faith and to nurture a spirit of penitence and works of penance in order to beseech, day after day, the grace of God.

The Church shows a maternal spirit to her children, especially those who, through no fault of their own, have been abandoned by their legitimate spouse.

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine Of the Church No:226)

All of us have family or friends that have experienced the sadness of separation and divorce. We must never abandon them. We must love them, pray for them and have the courage and strength as a church to welcome them into our midst just like Christ welcomed the children. He put his arms round them laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing. Remember Christ often disapproved of human behaviour, NOT the human person.

Fr. Paul is Parish Priest of Wauchope and he has been involved in Marriage preparation and the Marriage Tribunal since being ordained in 1990. Given that 4 in 10 marriages fails this article challenges us to reflect on how we respond when the marriages of family, friends and parishioners break down.

World Youth Day

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together with the Cross. Behold, your Mother! It will be a sign of Mary's motherly presence close to young people who are called, like the Apostle John, to welcome her into their lives." (Angelus, 18th World Youth Day, 13 April 2003).

This icon, a copy of a venerated icon in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, was present at the Vigil and Papal Mass of WYD 2000 in Tor Vergata in Rome.

Handover of the WYD Cross and Icon of Our Lady

Following the tradition established since the first international World Youth Day, the Handover of the Cross and Icon took place on Palm Sunday 2006 in St Peter's Square as part of the Palm Sunday Mass celebrated by His Holiness. The Cross was officially 'handed over' by youth

of the last host city, to youth of the upcoming host city.

The WYD08 Cross and Icon is currently undertaking its pilgrimage throughout Africa, South-east Asia and Oceania before arriving in Australia in July 2007, touching the lives of thousands of people as a sign of faith and hope.

The WYC Cross and Icon will arrive in Sydney on the 1st of July this year. This will be the day that World Youth Day 2008 really begins in our land. Each day from July 1, 2007, you will be able to follow the Journey of the Cross and Icon on the WYD website, as it blazes a way across the nation towards the gathering of the youth of the world around the Cross and with the Holy Father, for the celebration of WYD08 in Sydney.

We invite you to 'Join the journey'.

As It Was – The Bombing of Darwin Recalled by Dan McAloon

On 19 February 1942 mainland Australia came under attack for the first time when Japanese forces mounted two air raids on Darwin.

Sixty five years on, that event was commemorated in Darwin and recalled by Dan McAloon in his article: *Tiwi Islands Ministry – One People, Two Islands.*

Though it seems very remote from world affairs, history records how on February 19, 1942, the Catholic mission on Bathurst Island was the first place in Australia to experience war when Japanese bombers, on their way to Darwin, strafed Ngiuu. The priest in charge at the time notified Darwin of the incoming warplanes but his message was ignored. The impact of the war and its effects on the Tiwi people was experienced first-hand by Sr Barbara Tippolay AD. A proud Tiwi woman, Barbara is the regional leader of the Sister Handmaidens of Our Lord Congregation. In 1942, as a small child, Barbara was among a group of 30 girls in the care of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) who were evacuated to the strange environs of Melbourne and Adelaide to continue their schooling for the war's duration.

"My best memory is of the war finishing," Barbara recalls. "I was ten-years-old and the news came that we were going back. You should have seen the excitement in our little faces at the joy of going home!"

Today Barbara lives on Melville Island with another AD Sister, providing a pastoral ministry that combines catechist work with drug and alcohol education programs. The cost of alcohol and marijuana abuse within Tiwi society is a subject well documented, she says. "There is violence associated with it, especially for women. We can offer them our support in times of great need. Most of our communication is with the Tiwi women. According to Tiwi culture and tradition, if you work with the women first you are speaking to the family."

Although raised by the OLSH Sisters, Barbara has never



Re-enactment during the recent commemoration of the bombing of Darwin. Photo credit: Northern Territory News

considered herself one of the "stolen generation". "I don't know if my mother brought me to the convent - I never asked that question. All I remember is we were taken to Melville Island and then when war broke out in 1942 we were evacuated. All women and children were evacuated from Darwin too. The Sisters travelled with us to Melbourne where we stayed for a couple of months I believe. I was too young to remember."

"My own coming to religious life was a process of long discernment. I grew up at the boarding school and I think my life was touched by the way the sisters were with children, how they cared for the children. So this I think was the beginning of my call to life." Barbara was called to religious life with the AD Order and undertook her formation and teacher training in PNG.

The Tiwi Islands, comprised of Bathurst and Melville Islands, lie 80 kilometres north of Darwin across the Beagle Gulf. The Islands, separated by the narrow Apsley Strait, are home to the Tiwi people, who have lived here for thousands of years. In the late 1970s, ownership was handed back to the Tiwi people, who today administer lands through the Tiwi Land Council.



The scene on Darwin harbour at about 11 am on 19 Feb 1942. The Peary sinking at centre right (91 men lost) and the wharf area ablaze toward left. Photo credits: Peter & Sheila Forrest, Darwin