



the Voice of Compassion



Let us comfort
as many as we can.

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Supporters and Friends news

Issue 50 November 2020



Sisters Sue, Ruth, Margaret Anne and Lusi in the Archives

Nau mai

Dear Friends,

During the Lockdown we all had different experiences, including our own vulnerability in "our common home", the Earth. We are interconnected and an awareness of how we do and can support each other has come into focus. Thank you for your generosity to the Sisters of Compassion in recent times and over many years. You continue to give encouragement to the Sisters and to our co-workers as we care for those in need.

Sister Ruth renewed her vows and we were able to celebrate with her. We honoured our Jubilarians, Sisters Sia, Colette, Hulita and Rae (50 years), Sisters Mata and Sosefina (25 years) during the Mass on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Compassion on the 15 September. We now look forward to the celebrations when regular travel resumes.

As I write this article, on 1 October, many of us remember the Anniversary of Suzanne Aubert Meri Hōhepa's death. It is 94 years since her death. I visit the resting place of Suzanne Aubert Meri Hōhepa regularly. The sunlight reflections are mystical. Suzanne would not attribute the glow to herself, she would say, "There are on Earth many [people] who make much noise, and others who pass unknown. Everyone is rushing to the grave, and none will ever come back. The grave conceals rich as well as poor, there is no difference whatever between the ashes of the one and the ashes of the other."

This is a very matter of fact statement and certainly how Suzanne saw life and death. Yet we treasure our loved ones and the

things that mark their journey through life. Suzanne includes all of you along with the people we serve and support into this wonderful glow of light. God's love reaches out to all. It is not a choice we make.



Reflections in the Resting Place of Suzanne Aubert

Thank you for the choice you make to support us, we are grateful and we share Suzanne Aubert Meri Hōhepa's prayer "Thanks be to God for all He has done and is doing for us."

God bless you all.

Sister Margaret Anne Mills

Sister Margaret Anne Mills
Congregational Leader

Celebrating Gratitude

On the 15th of September I renewed my vows for one year as a Sister of Compassion. It was a beautiful day with the sun shining brightly. In the presence of my Sisters and some of those I work with at the Compassion Soup Kitchen, I renewed my three vows of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience in accordance with the Constitution of the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion.

Before renewing my vows, I wrote them out in a special vows book kept in our archives. I had the chance to look back on the first time I took my vows five years ago. I had led a full life working in the tourism industry in Fiji. I enjoyed working as a cook and baker and a variety of other tasks. The feeling that comes with being independent, financially and socially, is most reassuring. I knew nothing about the Sisters of Compassion. It was my older brother John who suggested that I get to know the Sisters because cooking and caring for the sick and the needy was a particular charism of theirs that would suit my interests and temperament. The rest, as they say, is history.

On the 15th of September 2015 I was first professed as a Sister of Compassion. It was celebrated in Fiji with the Sisters, family and friends who were able to attend. I remember standing in church that day without a doubt in my mind that I was where I was meant to be, even though I was very nervous. I experienced this same feeling as I stood and renewed my vows again this year. It continues to be a challenging journey. I must admit that the challenge of living out my journey as a young religious is an exciting one. It is never boring because each day I learn something new. I am grateful to have come this far.

Leaving the comforts and security of my own country and getting immersed into a new culture has been a growing curve for me. Working in the Soup Kitchen has been both challenge and blessing. I have been treated with respect and given responsibilities

as a junior professed sister and that has been a source of growth for me. I enjoy immensely using my talents as a cook and seeing in this gift a way to share in the mission of our Mother Foundress.

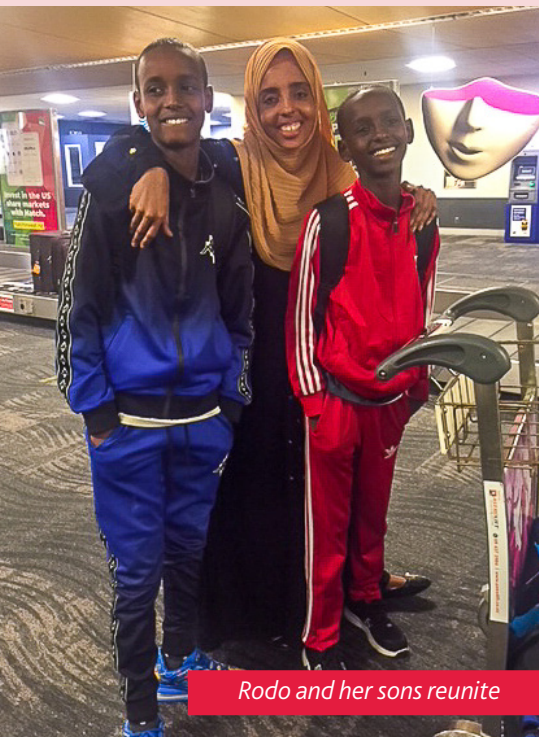
I have no regrets and am happy and confident in my decision. There have been many challenges these last few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have the privilege of working alongside a group of beautiful and dedicated group of women and men. While most have families, they came out during lockdown to help feed the homeless and lonely. Such commitment and dedication inspires me and encourages me in my discernment as a Sister of Compassion. It is in times like these that I am more certain that I am where I should be. I feel greatly affirmed that my response to the call to religious life can only be deepened in my conviction to be the image of compassion with my Sisters, with those whom I work and those who I minister to each day in the Soup Kitchen.

Sister Ruth Pickering



Sister Ruth filling in the vows book

Sister Margaret Mary's Gift



Rodo and her sons reunite

Before Sr Margaret Mary Murphy died in 2013, she befriended Rodo, a young refugee woman from Somalia, and helped her find work. As their friendship grew, Sr Margaret Mary found out that Rodo had left her two young sons behind in Ethiopia in desperate circumstances. Sr Margaret Mary worked tirelessly to help them get back together again, against all odds. She dedicated herself to this cause until the very end, pleading for compassion. Her wish was that Rodo and her boys be reunited in safety in New Zealand.

Sr Margaret Mary made a specific bequest to help Rodo and her boys overcome the obstacles facing them, and finally, six years after she died, the Immigration and Protection Tribunal decided that the children's special circumstances warranted an exception to policy, and they were granted residence. The Tribunal concluded that the boys' situation in Ethiopia jeopardised their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, and that it was in their best interests to be with their mother in New Zealand.

In March 2020 the two boys, aged 10 and 11, arrived in Wellington to join Rodo and their extended family to start their new life together. Rodo will never forget the depth of Sr Margaret Mary's love.

The Trust paid for the cost of application fees and medicals required by Immigration New Zealand, appeal fees and airfares.

Amanda Calder

Refugee Family Reunification Trust

A Golden Jubilee

On a beautiful autumn day Sister Bernadette celebrated her Golden Jubilee at Our Lady's Home of Compassion in the presence of a number of Sisters of Compassion. Father Rob Milne was the main celebrant. The event was all the more special with the presence of her brother Sosefo his wife Setefania, Paulo another brother, his daughter Ma'u and nephew Malakai, all coming from America. The choir was the Tongan Community choir from Upper Hutt. Since her Profession in 1970, Sister has worked mainly with Sister Flora in the crèche at Buckle and Sussex Street. Other appointments have been at Auckland, Island Bay, Timaru, Tonga and Whanganui. Sister completed religious courses at Marcellin Hall, and Marymount Centre at Castlehill in Australia. Sister Bernadette is extremely good at making rosary beads and every now and again she delights us with a pair as a gift for our feast day and at Christmas.

Today Sister lives at Marian Court in Heretaunga where she contributes to the life at St Joseph's Home of Compassion by visiting our Sisters in Care.



Sister Bernadette Mateo

Lockdown at the Soup Kitchen

COVID-19 saw the doors of the communal dining area close temporarily, but as an essential service, the Compassion Soup Kitchen remained committed to providing the whānau with nutritious kai daily during lockdown.

Suited up in PPE, two teams of dedicated staff and volunteers prepared takeaway meals as demand for food nearly doubled. Whānau visiting the Soup Kitchen were quick to settle into a new routine, respectfully social distancing in queues that sometimes stretched over 50 metres down the street. The kitchen provided on average 150 meals a day, for guests as well as for the Wellington Night Shelter, City Mission, Wellington Homeless Women's Trust and Women's Refuge.

Connecting with friends is a highlight for many guests of the Soup Kitchen. For some of the whānau, a shared meal in the communal area and the group programmes are their only means of social connection and community involvement. To try and fill this gap, staff and volunteers packed as much concern as they could into the short interactions they had with guests, as well as updating them on the government's daily COVID-19 briefings. Whānau said they abided by the rules, not because they were told, but because they wanted to protect themselves and the people around them whom they consider to be family. Many whānau kept an eye out for their mates, gathering extra meals for those in their apartment buildings who weren't able to come down to the kitchen. Thanks to everyone's contribution, the Soup Kitchen was able to do its part to support Wellingtonians going through hardship, as they have done for the last 119 years.



Vanessa and Louise, Soup Kitchen Volunteers

The Sisters of Compassion gratefully acknowledge the significant support of the Compassion Soup Kitchen by LT McGuinness Limited, Building Contractors

Compassion Housing



Compassion Housing, Upper Hutt

Compassion Housing continued to operate during the COVID-19 lockdown across both Upper Hutt and Horowhenua. The management team and nurses worked from home to minimise contact with the elderly residents. Along with the Sisters, they provided phone support around the clock to all 208 residents. During the calls, the nurses and Sisters informed the residents on the COVID-19 lockdown requirements and referred them to other support services when necessary.

Social distancing was a priority for regular staff as well as contractors. Food parcels were donated and distributed to the residents by our nurses and Sisters. Thankfully, all our residents and staff remained in good health and there were no cases of COVID-19 in Compassion Housing.



I have fallen into the Kingdom of Fungi,
 cymbals
 and trumpets.
 The flap, flap of the
 tuxedo.
 The whirl of the harp.
 Hidden so hidden
 yet joy to my sight
 as I bend low
 to hear with
 my eyes.

Sister Margaret Anne Mills

Reflections During Lockdown

When New Zealand went to Alert Level 4, the Sisters of Compassion wanted to reach out to people who were hurting in our community. We knew if Suzanne Aubert and the early sisters were alive they would be helping where they could. During the 1918 influenza pandemic, the sisters operated a temporary hospital where they nursed the sick. They also nursed the sick in their own homes.

During lockdown, we thought a way we could help was by offering a daily reflection. We based our reflections on the writings of Suzanne Aubert, who through her own experiences and faith, frequently wrote words of encouragement to the sisters. Many people emailed asking for prayers and we prayed and still pray for all their intentions.



You can read these reflections in
"Journeying with Venerable Suzanne Aubert"
 available from: www.compassion.org.nz/shop

Obituary

Sister Catherine Hannan (August 1935 - March 2020)

Sister Catherine Hannan was born on the 19th August 1935 in New Plymouth. Her parents were Kathleen Rosena Foster and George Willis. Catherine was the oldest of six children, her siblings were Sister Patricia OP, James, Willis, Gillian and Paul. The family moved to Invercargill while Catherine was young. There, she completed her education at St Catherine's Dominican College and excelled not only academically, but also in music, speech and sport.

Catherine entered the Sisters of Compassion on the 8 September 1953 and made her first Profession in 1956. Shortly after, she completed her teacher training in Auckland and went on to teach at our Homes of Compassion at Island Bay, Carterton, Jerusalem, Ranana and Wilcannia, Australia. After completing a diploma of Counselling and graduating in Social Studies with Honours, she returned to New Zealand in 1974. Sister was a Senior Social Worker at Catholic Social Services Wellington for several years and acted as Arohata Women's Prison Catholic Chaplain.

Sister Catherine was the leader of the Sisters of Compassion from 1986–1999. She then became the chairperson of the Caritas Board, reviewing projects on sustainable agriculture, the empowerment of poor women and ways to counteract the trafficking of women and children. Sister served in the Wellington Catholic Archdiocese Pastoral Council and the Wellington Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission, as well as serving on the board of Challenge 2000. She was part of the group that

formed the Wellington Homeless Women's Trust.

Sister Catherine volunteered actively at the Compassion Soup Kitchen, where she enjoyed welcoming guests who came in for a meal. Sister Catherine Hannan was awarded the Queen's Service Medal in the New Year's Honours 2020, in recognition of her services to the community. She once said, "It is not only that the love of God is the impelling force but I am endeavoring to give truth to Paul's words 'I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.' Would I do it again? I would want to do no other."

Sister Catherine passed away on the 12th March 2020. May she rest in peace.



Sister Catherine Hannan