

# I N F O R M

*Catholic Women's League Archdiocese of Sydney  
February/March 2021*



# President's Message

Let me commence by sharing a quote from "The Far East" by Fr. Trevor Trotter, Columban Mission Oceania Director:

"Who knows what this year holds? At these times I always remember a saying from one of the wise priests we had in the seminary. "We do not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future."

Nothing much has changed has it. 2020 has been a disaster that has affected all of our lives, some more than other, and while there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel it is fair to say we do not know what the future holds. But our God does, so let us all keep praying that he will provide the end to this virus we are so impatiently seeking.

2021 began for CWL Sydney Archdiocese in a much quieter way because of the current "distancing" restrictions. Our Opening Mass, that usually is a major event, was held on 9th February but had to be restricted to Councillors and one representative from each Branch. Not to be deterred and with optimism that restrictions will be modified or perhaps even lifted shortly, we are pressing ahead with plans to make this years St Patrick's Day event bigger and better than ever. So note your diaries for Tuesday 16th March and join us then so we can catch up with each others news, and begin to enjoy the company of our fellow members once again.

As we do not have a project of the year for 2021 your Executive Committee has decided to donate the proceeds from our upcoming St Patrick's



Day function to this worthy cause - those affected by Cyclone Yasa in Fiji.

Congratulations to Michelle Pedersen on her elevation to the position of CWL State President. We offer Michelle and her Executive our prayers and support during her term in office.

I am sad to report that our wonderful Office Manager, Maddie, has resigned to commence her teaching career. She has been a rock of support, not only by her obvious skills in co-ordinating the smooth running of the office, in communicating with members and publishing "Inform", but also in her readiness to be actively involved and contribute in the wider decision making process. I am sure you join with me in wishing Maddie every success and fulfilment in her new career.

Not all is bad news though because we have a new Office Manager, Rebeka O'Shea, who commenced on 2nd February. Rebeka comes highly recommended, including by our Chaplain Fr Greg, and we welcome her most sincerely and look forward to working with her.

Anthony Watts, our General Manager at Marian Court, continues to introduce change and innovation and I believe, inspiration for our residents. Did you see the feature about retirement villages in a recent issue of The Catholic Weekly? Marian Court was mentioned with pictures of Anthony and some residents.

I am sorry to again have to report serious illness among our CWL community. Our Vice-President Margaret Burke has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer so please keep her in your prayers.

May Mary Help of Christians pray for us.

Margaret Blomfield

President

11/02/2021

# FR GREG'S REFLECTION

*Fr Greg Morgan's Homily from the Opening Mass  
held Tuesday February 9th 2021*



*“It is when we all play safe that we create a world of insecurity.”  
“It is when we all play safe that we create a world of insecurity.”*

It is very tempting, particularly in an age of covid constraints, ongoing religious hostility, and technological distraction, to choose to ‘play our Catholicism safe’. What do I mean?

To ‘play our Catholicism safe’ is to reduce our call holiness to little more than a nice, pious ideal; rather than to dare to believe & discover it is my true destiny.

To ‘play our Catholicism safe’ is to write-off Christ’s moral teachings as too hard and too outdated; rather than to dare to believe & discover that they are the source of my true joy.

To ‘play our Catholicism safe’ is to excuse myself from the sacrament of penance; rather than to dare to believe & discover it is the means to experiencing true mercy.

To ‘play our Catholicism safe’ is to speak about the genius of Christ solely from within the confines of Churches, or within bureaucratic-

like safe-spaces, or from behind the existential shield of one's desk; rather than to dare to believe and discover that there is no greater use of one's voice; no greater use of one's talents; and no greater use of one's life than to proclaim and defend that genius – lovingly, boldly, yet always unashamedly – in a world that is crippled by self-doubt, indecision, and spiritual asininity.

Today's readings, perhaps providentially, implore you and I not to give into that temptation to safety and, thus, insecurity. To not diminish our Catholicism to mere 'lip-service' or to a cacophony of 'human traditions'. No! Our Catholicism has to be intrinsic to our identity; it has to permeate the way we live; and define who we are above all else.

In other words, a strong – robustly Catholic – identity is the antidote to insecurity

So, as you, the venerable leaders and members of the CWL, gather for the first time in this new year of grace, 2021, this new beginning, I pray that you will never lose sight of your identity; that you will never allow this organisation to give way to insecurity; but, instead, you will be inspired by your history; animated by your faith; emboldened by its genius; and feel proud to be Catholic women, who love Christ & His Church with their hearts as well as with their lips.

The Catholic Women's League has incredible potential to be a powerful source of social, cultural, and ecclesiastical change – precisely because it has the potential to define its identity in the powerful virtues of faith, hope, and love. Always clothed in even deeper prayer and nourished by Truth.

So, I say to you today: know who you are! Or, run the risk of being yet another insecure and inane organisation in an already insecure and, at times, inane Church.

You are not the Tea-Making League. You are not the Knitting League. You are not the Crochet League. You are not the Candlemakers League. You are the Catholic Women's League.

And, perhaps more than ever before, the Church in Australia and beyond, needs your voice; she needs your energy; she needs your





conviction. Because the genius of Catholicism is hopelessly incomplete if the genius of women and womanhood is not rejoiced, respected, and revered. For, as the first reading makes clear, “God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” Both male and female mirror and complement each other in the mystery of the Imago Dei.

Of course, what I am saying is by no means original. In his letter to Catholic women in 1995, St John Paul II said: “Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.”

But then he added: “I know of course that simply saying thank you is not enough.”

In other words, lip-service about the role of women in the Church is not enough. Your “insight” can help keep the Church “more honest and authentic”. And I firmly believe this is true, particularly in a post-Royal Commission age.

However, none of this should come at the expense of our Catholic tradition. In fact, as firmly as I believe the voice of women is essential for our future, so I believe that it is by rediscovering Catholic orthodoxy and, so, a genuinely Catholic identity as women that your voices will be more powerful; more palpable; more potent! And, by being honestly and authentically Catholic, you will remind priests and bishops, and all the faithful of their call to be authentic and honest as well.

Catholicism is not a religion of lip-service. It is a faith built upon risk-taking.

If you and I (and the Catholic Women's League) are not prepared to take risks for our faith, then we will die a slow death to irrelevance and obsolescence. But if you and I (and the Catholic Women's League) allow Christ to overcome our fears and our insecurities, our doubts and our worries, our gripes and our grievances, in order to be open to risk-taking and grace-filled change, then do not be surprised if the world begins to take a second look at Christ and his true Church; do not be surprised if thousands of Catholic women take a second look at the Catholic Women's League. For no one is attracted by insecurity; no one is attracted by a constant rhetoric of being in decline; but everyone is attracted by unwavering fidelity and a truly Catholic conviction.

**- Fr Greg Morgan**

## References

Dag Hammarskjöld, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, Volume III* (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1973), 142.

*Ibid.*, 142.

Pope John Paul II, "Letter to Women", 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_29061995\\_women.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html). Accessed on 9th February 2021. *Ibid.*

## **MARIAN COURT IS TRULY AN AMAZING PLACE**

I have been extraordinarily privileged to work there now for a full year (as of Shrove Tuesday!).

Summer – even the weird summer we have had to date – has been embraced at Marian Court. A sausage sizzle was held on 12th January with people taking advantage of the wonderful weather (and Harry's cooking) to eat perfectly cooked sausages and onion in the Marian House Courtyard – Bunnings eat your heart out! - The warm summer evenings provided a great semi shaded space to enjoy a meal outdoors – with upgrades and maintenance scheduled in 2021 it should be come even better!

In January we had a special birthday celebration with a resident (and Brian, as I promised, I won't mention your name!) turning 90. A splendid cake and personal blessing from the Pontiff made it a very special occasion.

In February, we not only have the usual “birthday lunch,” but also a special Shrove Tuesday “Pancake day” where we were pleased to have Fr Greg, the relatively new Chaplain for the Sydney Archdiocese on his first formal visit to Marian Court. After much debate we agreed on bought pancakes...my grandmother would have been horrified!

There have been various improvements at Marian Court; Sam our wonderful IT expert has re-jigged the speakers and sound system in the Chapel and dining room to make sure that, even with Covid-spacing, every word said by the Priest can be heard throughout the expanded Chapel.

As Covid restrictions have been relaxed, the Craft group has got going – now in Marian House instead of a resident's unit; Games night is back; as is Films on Sunday, the Films on Sunday being another beneficiary of the improved sound system.

Two residents have moved onto places that can better cater for their needs and we have welcomed new people. On arrival new residents get the updated “Guide” to Marian Court. This outlines all there is available, however as I assure every new resident and those who come to check us out – this is what is available; we are an independent living facility so there is no compulsion at all!

In closing, I would like to thank the Chairperson (don't call her President!) and members of the Residents' Committee; they represent the heart and soul of Marian Court. To all others I thank you for your help, advice, and support. Roll on 2021!

**Anthony Watts**  
**Manager for Marian Court**





\*\*\* Simplicity \*\*\*

Saying prayers is a simple thing

The same ones they seem to be

But as years go by there comes a change

Not in the prayers, in me

Then we begin to talk a lot in our hearts, yours and mine

To share our lives and plan the days

Giving joy in little ways

Prayer finds sublimity

\* \* \*

**Helena O'Neill**  
**Marian Court Branch**



### **Blessed Carlo Acutis (3 May 1991 – 12 October 2006)**

“Sadness is looking at oneself, happiness is looking at God. Conversion is nothing but a movement of the eyes”.

Amateur computer programmer, video game enthusiast and a devotee of the Eucharist – Blessed Carlo Acutis the millennial saint.

Carlo was an English born Italian who at the young age of 11, began to investigate the Eucharistic miracles that have occurred in history. Using his computer knowledge, he created a website that outlined all of these miracles he so loved to research before his death due to leukemia. He was noted for his cheerfulness, computer skills, and deep devotion to the Eucharist, which became a core theme of his life. He was beatified on 10 October 2020. Carlo could not understand why stadiums were full of people and churches were empty. He would repeatedly say, “They have to see, they have to understand.” He admired Giacomo Alberione's initiatives to use the media to evangelize and proclaim the Gospel and aimed to do likewise with the website he had created. It was on the website that he said: "The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of heaven".

In 1995, when Acutis was four years old, his maternal grandfather died and was said to have appeared to him in a dream asking to be prayed for. Three years later he requested to receive his First Communion at the early age of seven. Acutis became a frequent communicant and would make a weekly confession.

When he developed leukemia, he offered his suffering saying: "I offer all the suffering I will have to undergo for the Lord, for the Pope, and the Church". He had asked his parents to take him on pilgrimages to the sites of all the known Eucharistic miracles

in the world, but his declining health prevented this from happening. The doctors treating his final illness had asked him if he was in great pain to which he responded that "there are people who suffer much more than me". He died on 12 October 2006 at 6:45 AM from M3 fulminant leukemia. He was buried in Assisi in accordance with his wishes.

Acutis's mother, Antonia, is said to attribute to his intercession the fact that, at the age of 44, she gave birth to twins, born exactly four years to the day after his death. Following the Catholic Church's recognition of a miracle in 2020, attributed to Acutis, Antonia told the press that her son had appeared to her in dreams saying that he will not only be beatified but also canonised a Saint in the future.

The call for him to be beatified began not long after Acutis' death. On 14 November 2019, the Vatican's Medical Council of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints expressed a positive opinion about a miracle in Brazil attributed to Acutis' intercession. Luciana Vianna had taken her son, Mattheus, who was born with a pancreatic defect which made eating difficult, to a prayer service. Beforehand, Vianna had already prayed a novena asking for the teenager Acutis' intercession. During the service her son had simply asked that he should not "throw up as much". Immediately following the service, Mattheus told his mother he felt healed and asked for solid food when he came home. Until then he had been on an all-liquid diet. After a detailed investigation, Pope Francis confirmed the miracle's authenticity in a decree on 21 February 2020, leading to Acutis' beatification.

10 October 2020 the beatification Mass was held in the Upper Church of the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in Assisi, Italy, with Cardinal Agostino Vallini presiding on the Pope's behalf.

Sources:  
 Wikipedia  
 NCR





## **Lenten Prayer for Spiritual Renewal**

*God, heavenly Father,  
look upon me and hear my prayer  
during this holy Season of Lent.  
By the good works You inspire,  
help me to discipline my body  
and to be renewed in spirit.*

*Without You I can do nothing.  
By Your Spirit help me to know what is right  
and to be eager in doing Your will.  
Teach me to find new life through penance.  
Keep me from sin, and help me live  
by Your commandment of love.  
God of love, bring me back to You.  
Send Your Spirit to make me strong  
in faith and active in good works.  
May my acts of penance bring me Your forgiveness,  
open my heart to Your love,  
and prepare me for the coming feast  
of the Resurrection of Jesus.*

*Lord, during this Lenten Season,  
nourish me with Your Word of life  
and make me one  
with You in love and prayer.*

*Fill my heart with Your love  
and keep me faithful to the Gospel of Christ.  
Give me the grace to rise above my human weakness.  
Give me new life by Your Sacraments, especially the Mass.*

*Father, our source of life,  
I reach out with joy to grasp Your hand;  
let me walk more readily in Your ways.  
Guide me in Your gentle mercy,  
for left to myself I cannot do Your Will.*

*Father of love, source of all blessings,  
help me to pass from my old life of sin  
to the new life of grace.  
Prepare me for the glory of Your Kingdom.  
I ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,  
Who lives and reigns with You  
and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever.*

*Amen.*

## **WHAT TO COUNT**

Count your blessings instead of your crosses

Count your gains instead of your losses

Count your joys instead of your woes

Count your friends instead of your foes

Count your smiles instead of your tears

Count your courage instead of your fears

Count your full years instead of your lean

Count your kind deeds instead of your mean

Count your health instead of your wealth

Count on God instead of yourself.

Author Unknown



# IN MEMORY OF DENISE MCCAFFERY



## **DENISE RUTH MCCAFFERY**

**31/12/43 - 8/02/21**

Many CWL members would remember Denise McCaffery.

Denise was a member of CWL Sydney, and later CWL Wollongong, for many years. Denise originally joined CWL through the Concord West Branch, where she was very active in her Parish, St Ambrose, as an Acolyte and Minister of the Eucharist. More recently, she and her husband Jim moved to Cobbitty, Wivenhoe, where Denise joined the CWL Oaks Branch.

Denise also held Executive roles, including Treasurer of CWL Sydney and Secretary of CWLA New South Wales.

Many members of CWL Sydney attended Denise's funeral on Tuesday 16th February at St Paul's Catholic Church, Camden. CWL members formed a Guard of Honour at the recessional.

She will be dearly missed, and we continue to pray for her family and all those who mourn her. May she rest in peace.



# MADDIE'S FAREWELL

Midway through 2014, I was hired by then-President Loretta Chester to work in the CWL office once a week, assisting with administration. Over the years, my role morphed in different ways – helping to organise National and State Conferences, attending State meetings, organising many branch gatherings, and joining the occasional NCWNSW event – it's hard to believe that I have worked at CWL Sydney for six years, but upon reflection, a lot has happened!



In 2019 I decided to go back to university and study a Master of Secondary Teaching (English), and with only a few subjects left to go, I'm nearing the finish line. I'm currently teaching casually and as a result, will be closing my "CWL Sydney" chapter on the 2nd of March.

The Catholic Women's League is home to many talented, caring, and hardworking women, and working for this organisation has cemented in me the belief that when women come together, some incredible things can happen. I feel blessed to have worked for an organisation that deeply values feminine genius, compassion for those in need, and generosity in both spirit and resources. I've been blown away by the generosity of CWL members at our fundraisers, especially at events when there were fewer people.

I will always be grateful for the support all the CWL ladies have shown me over the years, particularly on my journey to teaching. I've been gifted with much wisdom from those I have met and worked with through CWL, whether it be about faith, relationships, or social issues, and will carry that with me well into the future.

I would like to thank all the ladies I've met as a result of working in the CWL office (whether it be in person or on the phone) for the wonderful work you all do. I would especially like to thank the women I have worked with on the CWL Sydney Executive over the years for their friendship, laughter, and incredible support, in particular during the last couple of years whilst I've been studying.

I know that you will all love and support the new CWL Sydney office manager, Rebeka O'Shea – she will do a fantastic job! I would also like to wish the Catholic Women's League as an organisation all the very best – I believe that there is a strong future for all of us.

**Maddie Er**



Members of CWL Summer Hill with friends at a Branch Gathering in Sydney

## **BRANCH PROFILE: CWL SUMMER HILL**

*"Summer Hill branch was started over 50 years ago and still retains one of its original members; Rita Lucas, who is in her 90's. We have 17 active members ranging in ages."*

**- Anne Wells, President, Summer Hill Branch**

Summer Hill branch has a history of amazing fundraisers and functions. Some of their past work includes fashion parades, lunches, raffle tickets, cake stalls, bingo nights, silver circles three times a year and so much more.

They are currently planning a fashion parade for 2021 with a lunch included. We look forward to seeing the ongoing good work of the Summer Hill branch. Thank you ladies for your service!



Fairfield Ladies Nan Nilon and Pat Percival

## **BRANCH PROFILE: CWL FAIRFIELD**

2020 was certainly a different year, but by no means a lost year. Because I was moving house in February of last year, I had already discussed with the ladies and changed the meetings to bi-monthly. So, we had all of those meetings and they were very well attended. We had enough room to observe COVID regulations, all sanitised and masked. Of course the masks came off when it was lunch time. During the winter months Matilda made beautiful soup to start with, then all the other goodies brought along. Our meetings were more social gatherings starting and ending with prayer. Our branch Chaplain, Father William Chong attended most meetings and on one occasion he brought along Sister Dominic, a Dominican Sister of Saint Cecilia from Nashville USA.

We did not have our usual fund raising events or any of our usual outings which we all missed. Matilda has been wonderful in getting around and visiting the members, which they appreciate very much, the isolation was difficult and lonely for most of our ladies, thank you Matilda. We had a lovely Christmas gathering here at our new house at Cobbitty, a beautiful lunch, a lot of fun and exchange of secret Santa gifts.

This year hopefully we can get back to more activities, and maybe some outings and fund raising.

We have one member on the sick list, Carmel Windred. Carmel and her late mother joined back in the early eighties. Carmel is in the end of life stage and will most likely be gone within days of me writing this article.

Our dear friend Pat Percival will turn 99 in May of this year, a great reason to celebrate with a great lady. Pat has been a dear friend and companion to me, she has participated in branch activities and has accompanied me to branch gatherings in Sydney for many years now. Nan Nilon, our only remaining founding member has also accompanied me to Sydney meetings for many years. Pat has also been a very active part of Sacred Heart Parish Cabramatta since the early fifties, including being a Catechist for many many years, and is still a Eucharistic Minister and Reader for Mass.

We look forward to a better year for all our Branches, and we look forward to Father Greg Morgan getting around to visit us at Fairfield.

Whatever trials we face ahead may we remain united in faith and place our trust in the Lord.

**Sandra Skarsky  
Fairfield Branch**



# ST PATRICK'S DAY FUNDRAISER PROJECT

For our St Patrick's Day branch gathering, we will be raising funds for those affected by Cyclone Yasa in Fiji.

The island of Vanua Levu bore the brunt of Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasa when it hit Fiji on 17th December 2020 leaving at least four people dead and one missing. Entire villages have been crushed and thousands of people are now homeless after what is one of the strongest storms ever recorded.

Tropical Cyclone Yasa has affected an estimated 93,000 people. 36 evacuation centres remain open to accommodate 928 displaced people. Humanitarian response is ongoing with the distribution of food rations, non-food items, and hygiene supplies.

On 30 January, Tropical Cyclone Ana followed a similar path as Tropical Cyclone Yasa but made landfall westwards over the main island of Viti Levu. Tropical Cyclone Ana arrived in Fiji waters as a Category 2 cyclone but brought a lot of rain causing widespread flooding across the Central, Western and Northern Divisions. Impacts of Ana have been felt across the whole country. Worst impacted are the communities in the provinces of Macuata and Cakaudrove that were still recovering from Yasa.

As of 2 February, Fiji National Disaster Management Office reported 14,755 evacuees in 422 evacuation centres across the country. Extensive flooding caused damage to infrastructure with 131 roads and crossings temporarily closed. All major roads in Vanua Levu remained closed cutting off supply of food and relief items to affected areas.

There have been two confirmed fatalities and three people reported missing. The main concerns are increased risk of leptospirosis, typhoid, dengue and diarrhoea due to poor water access and standing water. Hygiene is a concern due to the lack of access to clean water. Early recovery efforts for livelihoods, fixing shelters and access to food and water are all required.

Sources: ABC News; Relief Web

Photograph: Lice Movono/AFP/Getty Images via  
The Guardian Australia



# NEWS AND DIARY DATES

## *CWLA NSW*

We are pleased to announce that Michelle Pederson has been elected CWLA NSW President. We thank Anne Pereira for the fantastic job she has done as State President the last three years. We wish Michelle and her Executive all the very best for their term on the State Executive.

## *CWL Sydney*

### **Tuesday 16th March:**

10:30am, \$20. We are very excited to host our first branch gathering since closing for Covid-19. We will be celebrating St Patrick's Day so please dress in green. Entertainment will be a musical performance. Numbers limited - **bookings essential** due to Covid-19 policy. Please RSVP by 11th March.

## *Submit to Inform!*

Our next issue of *Inform* will be published in May and we would like to hear from our readers.

Send us your stories about a time when you experienced the **true meaning** of "**Pentecost**". Maybe someone did something particularly giving; maybe you witnessed the Holy Spirit in a big way, or maybe you read about something interesting relating to Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.

Please send your stories or photos to us at [cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org)

*Become a Member of Catholic Women's League  
Archdiocese of Sydney Today!*

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Cost: \$35 for Branch Members, \$40 for Diocesan Members

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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I'm joining \_\_\_\_\_branch

OR

I'm joining as a Diocesan member

I am willing to receive information by email: YES/NO

Please return with remittance of \$35 or \$40 to:

Catholic Women's League Archdiocese of Sydney  
133 Liverpool St, Sydney 2000

Ph: 9307 8383

Email: [cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org)

*Thank you!*

*If you have news from your branch, upcoming events, or interesting articles  
you'd like to share, please let us know - [cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org](mailto:cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org)*