

I N F O R M

*Catholic Women's League Archdiocese of Sydney
September/October 2020*



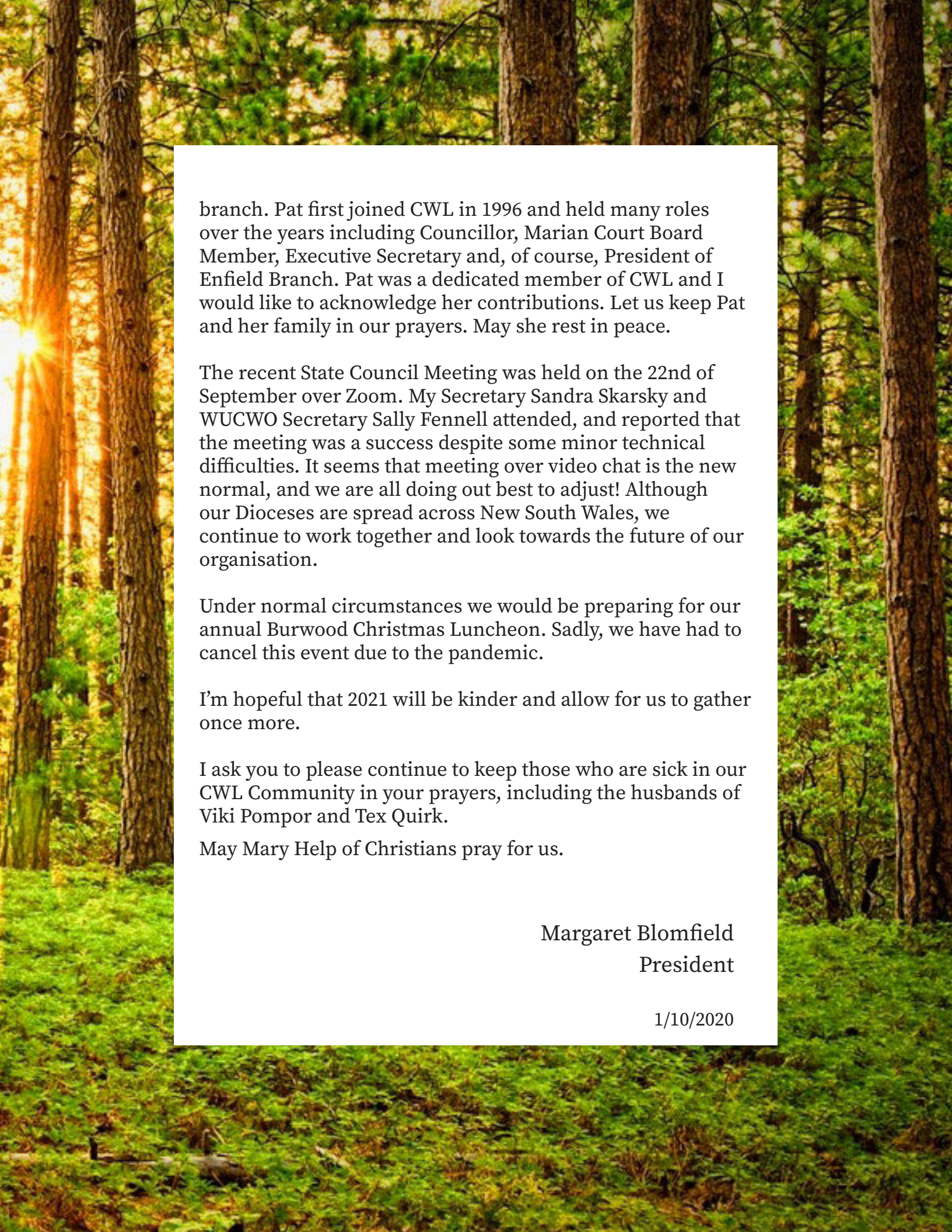
President's Message

This issue of Inform is full of love for our fathers and father figures, having recently celebrated Father's Day in early September. Thank you to all who sent in their memories and thoughts, I hope you enjoy reading our members' contributions.

I was very pleased to be able to host a Council Meeting in September at the Polding Centre – the first time we have gathered as a Council since March. We were all seated in a socially distant manner, but it was still great to see everyone again after such a long time, and there was much to discuss. Our October Council Meeting is scheduled to go ahead, with Councillors looking forward to meeting our new Chaplain, Fr Greg Morgan, who will be joining us for lunch.

As you will have been made aware, we have decided to put the Project of the Year on pause for this year as the difficulties in being able to meet and raise money together will certainly be hindered by the pandemic, and in turn our ability to do justice to whichever project we were to support. In the meantime, I have suggested to the Branches to look at supporting disaster relief for those affected by the recent blast in Lebanon. Thank you to all those Branches that have already donated.

I'm sad to report that a Life Member of CWL Sydney passed away recently, Patricia Ambrose of Enfield



branch. Pat first joined CWL in 1996 and held many roles over the years including Councillor, Marian Court Board Member, Executive Secretary and, of course, President of Enfield Branch. Pat was a dedicated member of CWL and I would like to acknowledge her contributions. Let us keep Pat and her family in our prayers. May she rest in peace.

The recent State Council Meeting was held on the 22nd of September over Zoom. My Secretary Sandra Skarsky and WUCWO Secretary Sally Fennell attended, and reported that the meeting was a success despite some minor technical difficulties. It seems that meeting over video chat is the new normal, and we are all doing our best to adjust! Although our Dioceses are spread across New South Wales, we continue to work together and look towards the future of our organisation.

Under normal circumstances we would be preparing for our annual Burwood Christmas Luncheon. Sadly, we have had to cancel this event due to the pandemic.

I'm hopeful that 2021 will be kinder and allow for us to gather once more.

I ask you to please continue to keep those who are sick in our CWL Community in your prayers, including the husbands of Viki Pompore and Tex Quirk.

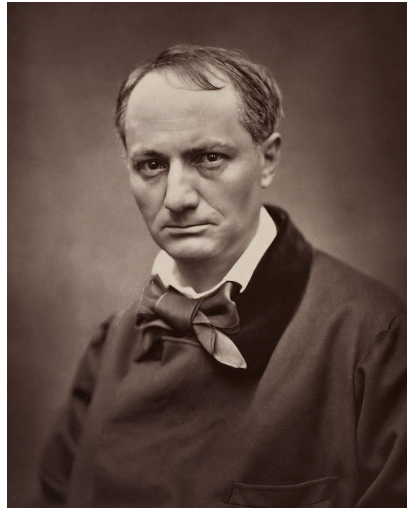
May Mary Help of Christians pray for us.

Margaret Blomfield
President

1/10/2020

FR GREG'S REFLECTION

Fatherhood is a Dying to Self in Order to Live for Others



Charles Baudelaire

“Only three...” “There are only three being’s worthy of respect”, so avowed the irreligious French poet, Charles Baudelaire. “The Priest, the Warrior, and the Poet.” “Other men”, he writes, “are taxable and exploitable; [they are] made for the stable.” A strange remark with which to launch this brief note on Father's Day! Baudelaire’s remark is certainly curious to say the least. Often it has been derided as idealistic and elliptical at best or fatuous and foolish at worst. And I, myself, should quickly add the caveat that I did not choose this quotation because I agree with it. In fact, I fervently believe respect is something to be earned. I chose it because I found the underlying sentiment resonates closely with what is at the core of fatherhood and perhaps what we celebrate most of all – even if we don’t necessarily acknowledge it – on Father’s Day.

Baudelaire lived in Paris during the 19th Century – a time of incredible socio-economic and political upheaval. As a poet, he tasked himself with ‘watching’. Watching in order to identify what it was that really drove the worldly ambitions of the modern man and woman. What is it that the modern man or woman now live for in this new

industrial age? Although no devout Catholic, what Baudelaire discerned was very illuminating. Lying beneath the exterior of the new society was an interior battle to hide an emptiness; a nothingness; a selfish materialism that was enveloping the hearts of the modern man and woman.

So, why, then, did Baudelaire's gaze gravitate to the priest, the warrior, and the poet? Well I think it was this: that intrinsic to the very nature of these three existences – when they are lived with integrity – is the preparedness “TO DIE”. The priest dies to the world to acquire divine truth; the warrior dies to his/her enemies to protect freedom; and the poet dies to his/her critics for beauty.

All Catholics are, in this sense, to be priestly, warrior-like, and poetic. But Pope Francis said that fatherhood especially is about “giving life to others.” In other words, intrinsic to the vocation is a desire to lay down one's life – to die – through big and small sacrifices in order to give life to his family. “When a man does not have this desire,” says the Pope, “something is missing in this man. Something is wrong. All of us, to exist, to become complete, in order to be mature, we need to feel the joy of fatherhood: even those of us who are celibate. Fatherhood is giving life to others, giving life, giving life...For us, it is pastoral paternity, spiritual fatherhood, but this is still giving life, this is still becoming fathers.”

Our time is not that much different to that of Baudelaire's. At least pre-Covid, many people busied themselves with the things of this world simply for the sake of acquiring more of the material things of this world. But the essence of the Catholic life is not to buy more but to be more. Many people think of relationships, especially marriage and family, as solely a means to satiate another worldly want. Is it in anyway unsurprising, therefore, that so many relationships break down? But Jesus taught us that every vocation is about taking up one's cross, to lay down one's life, and, in so doing, give life to others. Perhaps an important project – or, at least a prayer intention – of the Catholic Women's League is to encourage men to aspire to Christ's lofty call. For the more we give of our life to the love and service others, the more we, too, find life; life to the full! Of course, this takes a great deal of grace!

FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL

Father's day has come around again this year - we asked our readers to send in stories about their own fathers and father figures. We hope you enjoy reading. Thank you to those who sent something in!



Lately I do often reflect on my Dad, a fairly quiet, humble man who liked a weekly drink and bet with his mates at the local pub.

All his life he was a shared dairy farmer at Morpeth in the Hunter Valley. He was one of 7 so he and another brother shared the family farm.

Dairy farming meant early morning milking in the dark, rain, hail or shine even flooding times. Milking again in the afternoon all by hand. They also grew millet (for brooms) to be cut by hand with a sharp knife during January.

One thing I noticed he knelt for a little prayer on the lino floor before the long walk to the dairy.

What lovely memories us 6 children have – I feel sad for children with no Dad memories.

*Annette Rowley
Oatley Branch*

My Father was a very special man. He raised 9 children and I never once heard him get cross. He was always very calm. He fought in the 1st World War and was badly wounded in Poziers. He was repatriated to England and spent many months in hospital. He was eventually sent back to Australia. He wrote to my Mother such beautiful cards. We kept them for years and my sister passed them on to the War Archives in Brisbane.

My very first memories of Dad were in Inglewood (where I was born) learning to ride a bike. Dad would be attending to the vegetable patch and he set up a box so I could get myself on to the bike. If I fell he was there to pick me up.

Dad worked for the Land's Department so we moved to Rockhampton when I was 8. Dad had an accident and broke his jaw. It was all wired and he could hardly talk and had soft food. He retired from the Department. We bought a poultry farm. We raised chickens, fox terriers. It was a great life. My sister lost her arm in a grain machine and we then moved closer into Rockhampton. Dad bought a shop opposite the cemetery and he grew flowers and we sold these. We sold groceries and we also had milk shakes. We moved to Brisbane and Dad had all sorts of jobs.

He was a hard worker. He was an excellent husband and father and was special and he always showed Mum great care and love. He died in 1961 just six months after I got married. His funeral was attended by so many of his friends and even my Nanny attended which I think was a special tribute to my Dad. I still miss him after all these years.

*Margaret Burke
CWL Sydney Vice President
President Dennistone Branch*



Drawing by Helen Cook

My Father – Francis John Willis

When Singapore fell to the Japanese Army during World War II, my father Francis John Willis, who was born in Red Range in the New England Tablelands, became a Prisoner of War. The Japanese believed, that to surrender was the ultimate disgrace, so the captured soldiers were treated as slaves and used as cheap, disposable forced labour to build the infamous Burma/Thailand railway, linking Rangoon with Bangkok.

My Dad was selected by number, to join “F” Force, a working party located in the centre of the cholera belt, near the Burmese border, where through starvation, exhaustion, tropical diseases and no medical help, the death rate was greater than in any other Force on the railway. He worked 14 hours a day on a daily diet of just 190 grams of rice, in bare feet, tattered clothing and torrential rain for months on end. He suffered from tropical ulcers, malaria, beri-beri, dysentery and dengue fever. With permanent damage to his eyesight and digestive system, due to starvation and a lack of vitamins, he was often beaten by the guards, but he survived. On his return to Singapore, although a life-long Protestant, he was chosen to lay a wreath on the altar in the Changi Chapel, at a Mass to commemorate all who had died on the Burma Railway.

At the end of the war, he returned to an unrecognisable world, with advanced technology, independent women, grown children, no assets and no specific qualifications. As a consummate salesman however, he worked hard, relocated when necessary and ultimately owned his own home and business.

He never talked about what they had all endured while building the Burma railway, but for the rest of his life, he woke in the night, shouting words of warning, Japanese phrases or just plain shouting. He appeared to be able to blot out the horrors he had seen and endured during the day, but for the next forty years or so, he seemed to re-live them every night. He had no illusions about the honour and glory of war. He saw how senseless it was and never expressed repugnance towards the Japanese or wasted time looking back. He just concentrated on getting on with his life.

My Dad was a very good man. He took life as it came and never let hardships defeat him. He was kind and generous, loved his family, always put them first and was a great role model for all of his children and grandchildren

*Jay Turner
CWL Sydney Councillor
Concord West Branch*



In her book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*, doctor and counsellor Rachel Remen tells how her grandfather gave her a paper cup when she was four years old. Expecting a surprise she was disappointed when she found the cup contained only black soil. “Mummy won’t let me play with dirt”, she said. Her grandfather quietly put the cup on Rachel’s windowsill and told her to use the teapot from her tea-set to water the soil every day and wait for a surprise. Bewildered, she still did as her grandfather had suggested. But, after a week she asked him if it was time to stop. “No”, he said “keep watering a little bit every day”. Then, one morning after watering for three weeks, Rachel discovered two little green leaves that were not there the night before. She was sure her Grandfather would be surprised as she rushed to tell him. But of course he wasn’t. Carefully he explained to Rachel that life is everywhere, hidden in the most ordinary and unlikely places. “Then all it needs Grandpa, is a little water? Patting her on the head, he explained “No Rachel dear, all it needs is your faithfulness.”

Some of life's certainties – the five things we cannot change:

Everything changes and ends
 Things do not always go according to plan
 Life is not always fair
 Pain is a part of life, and
 People are not loving and loyal all the time

*Rae Wales
 CWL Sydney Councillor
 Dennistone Branch*



Fr Bernard

My father, David Way, was a kind and caring father to his four daughters. He loved his garden, I remember as a child helping him plant the spring annuals and vegies, also feeding the chucks! In winter, he would bring baby chicks inside for us to hold and keep warm by the kitchen wood fire. It was a delight. I also have memories of going to 6am Mass with him, as he was a very devout Catholic.

Dad's twin brother, Fr Bernard Way, was a Columban Missionary priest, in the far-off land of Burma (now Mynamar) for 40 years. Our Aunt regularly packed parcels of food for him which we children loved to help do, especially adding chocolates and sweets!

In 1942 in Burma, after much machine gunfire, looting and burning of buildings, Fr Bernard and the priests were taken prisoner by the Japanese. Firstly to jail as "refugee guests of the Japanese", then later they were shipped to Mandalay, the usual trip of 2 days taking 15 days which they called the worst journey in the world -- 25 in a space 21 feet x 7 feet, in which they had to sleep, cook and eat. They were exposed to rain for 5 days and the old roof on the deck was leaking, so they got a lot of it. He developed malaria for 6 months later on but survived.

Finally, they were interned in the Leper Asylum which had remained intact; the Japanese being frightened of the disease and not touching anything there. Here they were gathered from all over Burma, about 200 priests and nuns. With bare essentials, they said Masses. Their diet was rice and beans. They worked in the garden which they made, for exercise, going to get their firewood, chop down trees and bring them home to saw and chop daily.

They had a large duck farm getting up to 20 eggs a day, a few pigs completed the farmyard. The priests also became expert at repairing the Sister's shoes-about 100 sisters. The night raids were deafening but they were safe, thank God.

Finally, in 1945 war ended and they were released. They had survived even though they suffered the effects of such an extreme ordeal. Their prayers and devotions to Our Lady were answered. Fr Bernard remained in Burma for another 30 plus years then he returned to Australia where he ministered to the Burmese community in Perth for 13 years until his death in 1993.

The twins, David and Bernard were wonderful fathers, - David to us and Fr Bernard to the wider community.

*Kathryn Wojcicki
Oatley Branch*

FRANCIS PATRICK DOWNS 1926 – 1987

My father was a beautiful, kind, loving gentleman of a father. With a supportive and devoted wife and 6 children, he was always busy but that did not stop him getting up very early each morning for a swim and to attend daily Mass. He volunteered at Matt Talbot Hostel as well as other places and we he was a great role model for us all.

One of his great sayings that has always stayed with me is – It will pass, everything will look better in the morning. How often do our fears and worries magnify in the dark.

As his eldest child, I was so blessed that he got to know and love my husband and my children.

He was taken from us all way too soon, but his lasting love and compassion and life's lessons, live on in his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We love and miss you Dad.

*Chris McKirdy
CWL Sydney Office & Councillor*

When we were growing up, my Dad was vehemently against us having pets, namely a pet dog or cat. He was completely immune to our begging, too, and trust me - we did beg! Steadfast in his reasoning that one, pets are expensive, two, they require a lot of time and care, and three, he couldn't even rely on us kids to clean up after ourselves, let alone an animal, the likelihood of us having a pet remained a fantasy.

In all fairness, Dad did let us have a "low maintenance" pet: bunny rabbits. We loved our bunnies - in particular, Honey, who was very intelligent and cheeky; he figured out how to break free from his hutch, and would stomp his foot to get attention and ask for food. But like most children we longed for the same kind of pet that our friends had. I remember sleeping over at a friend's house as a kid and spending more time with the cat than I did playing with her, much to her annoyance.

More recently however, something seemed to change in my Dad, because on my sister's 18th birthday he seemed to crack. Maybe our years and years of badgering had finally wore him down, because he agreed that she could get a kitten as a birthday present. And although he had agreed to it, his prediction was, in his words, "that cat will be trouble".

Coco was a small, fluffy Russian-blue ragdoll, so tiny that she could fit in your palm. We all took turns holding her, playing with her, taking photos and sending them to friends. We trained her to wear a harness and would take her for walks outside, much to the amusement of passers-by. My dad would stand back and watched as we fussed over the kitten. He huffed and puffed whenever Coco jumped up on the kitchen table, complained about the fur she shed, and was furious when she peed on the lounge.

But I had my suspicions that Coco was growing on him - sometimes I would catch him talking to her, picking her up for a cuddle or offering to be the one to feed her. On one particular afternoon, I borrowed his mobile phone to check the time. Clicking the button to see his screen background, I couldn't help but laugh.

The photo was of him sitting on the couch, beaming, with Coco perched on his shoulder.

*Maddie
CWL Sydney office*

St Charles and the Plague

By Richard Mathews, archivist

Charles Borromeo, 16th-century Archbishop of Milan, is a good patron saint to have in a time of pandemic. In 1576 when the bubonic plague struck the city, he stayed with those who could not leave, while wealthy notables and others who could do so fled to their villas and farms in the countryside. He organised hospitals for the poor and personally visited and took them communion, inspiring his clergy to do likewise. When the churches had to be closed to prevent large numbers gathering, he set up altars out of doors and celebrated Mass with 'social distancing'. He spent his own and the Church's money freely to feed the poor, even giving some of his own clothes and Church tapestries to warm and comfort them.

Over 6,000 people died in less than two months, but in time the plague ended, as all such plagues do. At the end of the plague the outdoor altars were dismantled, but in their place, in gratitude, 'plague crosses' were erected, some of which still remain. These memorials are topped in each case by the symbol of the cross. In St Charles' Church, Ryde, one of the stained-glass windows in the sanctuary shows St Charles at work among the people during the plague.



*Extracted from the Parish Bulletin of
St. Charles Borromeo Ryde-Gladesville*
[https://drive.google.com/file/
d/1p3elzzPd23BGhBiUzGSDzNuXdu-1C61f/
view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p3elzzPd23BGhBiUzGSDzNuXdu-1C61f/view?usp=sharing)

IN MEMORY OF PAT AMBROSE

Patricia Ambrose of Enfield Branch was a Life Member of CWL Sydney, having held different offices at CWL Sydney over the years, and was President of Enfield branch for many years. More recently, she helped mentor current Enfield President Annie Wong. Here, Annie writes about some of the memories she shared with Pat. We pray for Pat and her family. May she rest in peace.



Pat, as I know... By Annie Wong

One morning, after our branch meeting, Pat and I went to have lunch at Flower Power. As we were leaving the car park we suddenly remember we hadn't paid. Pat quickly drove back. Usually we pay when we order, but the new cafe owner changed to pay when you go!

Pat was very enthusiastic about our (Enfield Branch) 40th anniversary celebration. From invitations to the celebration Mass to catering Pat was involved. She gave me the CWL badge to put on and said she had an extra one.

Pat was very excited when she decided to get a new car. It's brand new and was being ordered from Japan. She promised to take me for a ride once she got it - which she did one day, after our meeting.

Ann King and I visited Pat at Alwyn Rehab. Knowing that she was moving to live with her niece, Keran, in Melbourne, I asked her what's going to happen

to her dog Malcolm. Apparently, she had found a good home for him. She had even got permission for Malcolm and the new owner to meet with her at Alwyn for the takeover.

One year Pat gave Audrey Stewart a lift to our meeting at Polding Centre. I went with Pat afterwards to pick up her car. The car park was a bit far from the Polding Centre. Once there, we couldn't find the car. The security guard must have seen us on CCTV and came to our rescue.

Pat was also one of the choir members in St Joseph's, our parish church for over 20 years. Did you know Pat loved yum cha? She told me that she went with the choir members to the restaurant in Strathfield.

Pat was a good friend and a teacher. I only knew her after I joined Enfield Branch as an active member. She was an inspiration to us all. All members of Catholic Women's League value her contribution and friendship. We will miss her dearly.



At the Have Heart gathering in 2006



Pat speaking at the Enfield 40th Anniversary



Pat's farewell before moving to Melbourne



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops' annual Social Justice Statement focuses on mental health

Media Release

August 3, 2020

The Catholic bishops of Australia have released the Social Justice Statement 2020-21, on the critical subject of mental health, in the lead-up to Social Justice Sunday on August 30.

The, ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, encourages faith communities, governments and individuals to make mental health a priority.

Bishop Terry Brady, Bishop Delegate for Social Justice on the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, has called on all Catholics to take up the message and challenges of the Statement.

"This is a timely message in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is affecting many members of our parishes, schools and communities," Bishop Brady said.

"The personal feelings of anxiety and despair we all share at this time provide an opportunity to become more aware and active in fostering the mental health of all. Understanding mental health will help us to be aware of those who most need our support."

The Statement encourages parishes and local communities to be places of welcome and inclusion, overcoming the barriers and stigma often faced by people experiencing mental ill-health. It demands the commitment of governments and policy-makers to prevent so many people falling through the cracks of the mental health system.

It also calls for the nation's commitment to address those policies that exacerbate the already precarious circumstances of First Australians and refugees and asylum-seekers.

"Our society tends to push away or draw away from those who confront us with our frailties and limitations. This is not the way of Jesus," Bishop Brady said.

"Let us follow him in drawing near to those who are experiencing mental ill-health and acknowledge that they are members of the Body of Christ – 'they' are part of 'us'. Only then can we say 'we are all in this together'. Only then can we 'live life to the full'."

In addition to the written statement, which is free to download, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's Office for Social Justice has also produced an audio recording of the statement. Prayer cards are available to download and liturgical resources will be available for parishes to mark Social Justice Sunday on August 30.

"I commend this Statement to every parish, school and Church network and invite you to promote it as widely as possible," Bishop Brady said.

The 2020-2021 Social Justice Statement, ***To Live Life to the Full: Mental health in Australia today***, can be downloaded from the Office for Social Justice website: http://bit.ly/SocialJustice_2020

Stress Management



A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?" Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500g. The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it."

"If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

He continued, "And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on."

"As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden."

"So, before you return home tonight, put the burden of work down. Don't carry it home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you're carrying now, let them down for a moment if you can."

"Relax; pick them up later after you've rested. Life is short. Enjoy it!"



TIME FOR A LAUGH!



There was once a fellow who, given a choice, invariably made the wrong decision.

One day, it was noticed that he had inherited a million dollars. He was given the choice of getting his inheritance in either Peru or Brazil. He chose Brazil.

Had he chosen Peru, he'd have inherited land on which a huge load of platinum had just been discovered.

In Brazil, he was given the choice of coffee or nuts. He chose nuts, and the bottom fell out of the nut market. The coffee market boomed.

He had just enough money left for a ticket back home. He could afford only two airlines, so he chose one. The one he didn't choose was a well-funded new company with a modern aircraft and good support system. The airline that he chose taxied up: a beat up old DC-3 with a grouchy stewardess who spoke no English.

Over the sea an engine fell off. He was given the choice of two parachutes, only one of which worked.

Of course, you know which one he chose.

As he was falling he cried out, "St. Francis, save me!"

A hand reached down from heaven, and as he hung there between heaven and earth, a voice asked him a question:

"St Francis Xavier or St Francis of Assisi?"

Have a funny story or joke you'd like to share? Send it to us at cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org

NEWS AND DIARY DATES

Women's Voice Subscription

A note for those who subscribe to the WUCWO magazine, "Women's Voice", to please contact Margaret Burke via our office regarding subscription payment. Similarly, if you would like to subscribe to Women's Voice, please contact us and we will arrange for it. Call our office (Tuesday's preferable) on 9307 8383 or email cwlsydney@sydneycatholic.org

Burwood Christmas Luncheon - Update:

Unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions in relation to social gatherings, our annual Christmas Luncheon at Burwood RSL has been cancelled.

We are disappointed but unfortunately the RSL would be unable to host us all due to social distancing restrictions.

We hope that restrictions ease next year, and we're able to starting holding gatherings in the Polding Centre once more.

Submit to Inform

Our next issue of *Inform* will be close to Christmas (doesn't time fly!) and we would like to hear from readers.

Send us your stories about a time when you experienced the true meaning of "**Christmas spirit**". Maybe someone did something particularly giving; maybe you witnessed a "Christmas miracle" (big or small), or maybe you read about something interesting relating to Christmas and the birth of Jesus.

Please send your stories and photos to us at 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: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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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

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*