



OUR LADY OF
FATIMA
PEAKHURST

THE BARK

MARCH 2024 ISSUE

*As we are immersed in this holy season of Easter, it is a special time to reflect on the many blessing in our lives and our parish. In this issue of **The Bark** we acknowledge the wonderful work of Mike Flanagan with St Vincent de Paul over so many years. As well, we can read of the constant caring of the Friendship Group, Catholic Women's League, Vinnies and the service of Lending a Hand, Music Ministry and The Search program. Father Brian has shared his recent journey of renewal with us and, of course there is much more.*

May the joy of the Risen Christ be with you and your families.



So much to celebrate

What a spectacular night it was! On the Monday before Christmas many of our volunteers rallied to bring to life the One Meal Riverwood Christmas party. We hosted a sit-down meal for around 110 of our beautiful guests. Our food rescue partners – Woolies Kingsgrove - gave hams and chickens to us and our fabulous, hard-working volunteers made an enormous array of delicious salads.

We had donations of Christmas cake, pavlovas, bon bons, tinsel, lolly bags, grocery packs and Christmas goodies. We are so grateful to the wonderful Peakhurst CWL ladies who so generously and lovingly decorated all the pavlovas. This feast was topped off with ice cream and custard and, of course, a visit from Santa Claus. It was a truly wonderful evening.

One Meal Riverwood is an outreach of Our Lady of Fatima and has been managed and co-ordinated by our spectacular **Lending a Hand Team** for the past six years. In 2023 we had cooking and serving teams from OLF Peakhurst as well as teams made up of volunteers from Marist Peakhurst, SDN Riverwood, St Therese's Padstow, St Joseph's Riverwood, Regina Coeli Beverly Hills and St Declan's Peakhurst. With the help of these many generous volunteers we estimate that we served around 3900 meals in 2023. Congratulations and thanks to all who help out with this very practical, hands-on ministry.

Emma Williams, Lending a Hand/One Meal

This amazing service is co-ordinated by Emma who recruits volunteers, spends hours driving the van to rescue groceries and food from Woolies at Kingsgrove and other donors, liaises with Riverwood Community Centre and so much more. Thank you Emma! Ed.



Can you spot any familiar faces?



Behind the scenes preparations for the One Meal Christmas Party in December



Welcome back!



Some of you may remember the Samoan choir that sang monthly when Fr John Crothers was our parish priest a number of years ago. Well, they're back! The then youngest members now have children of their own and have reformed as the Samoan Family Choir (SFC) to bring us our newest addition to the OLF music ministry. Consisting of cantors and a very accomplished pianist and conductor, the choir members are primarily from 4 different family groups spanning across four generations! Proud great grandparents Mr & Mrs Paulo have been OLF parishioners for over 20 years, with the extended family choir members travelling from all corners of Sydney to grace us with their music. They are currently rostered monthly for the Sunday 6pm Mass and take the opportunity to spend some family time together over a meal after church.

We welcome their return with open arms and thank them for sharing their gift of music and love of the Lord with our parish. ❤️

Susie Paino

MIKE FLANAGAN HONOURED

At the Georges River Council's 2024 Australia Day Awards, it was wonderful to witness Mike Flanagan receive the Volunteer of the Year Award.

As a volunteer for the St Vincent de Paul Society, Mike has made a contribution that has inspired his fellow volunteers. He is now in his 21st year of service, with the last eight years as President of the Our Lady of Fatima Conference at Peakhurst.

This important leadership role has required Mike to organise and manage home visits, co-ordinate with the State body, introduce and support members with introduction of new State processes and the use of updated technologies, and oversee appeals. Mike's outstanding communication and ability to build rapport have underpinned his successful leadership style. He exemplifies 'Servant Leadership' which helps explain the increase in volunteers under his leadership.

Mike has, on a weekly basis, attended to the needs of local individuals and families who have suffered as a result of homelessness, disability, mental health, incarceration and/or domestic violence. Personal visitation to those in need has been followed by providing material aid to address immediate requirements—food, clothing, bills, furniture. This has included attending local supermarkets to purchase food, then storing and distributing it.

Every year at Christmas, Mike co-ordinates food and gift donations from parishioners and external sources to produce hampers for needy families. These hampers are then personally delivered so as to provide some much-appreciated Christmas cheer.

In one month alone, Mike oversaw the relocation of seven families who required furniture, white

goods, linen, cutlery, crockery, food and clothing all of which needed to be sourced and delivered.

Mike has received a 20 Year Certificate of Service from the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. However, Mike is not motivated by awards but rather seeing families have the opportunity to re-establish themselves in the community. His achievements are measured by the hundreds of families he has assisted in his more than 21 years of service.

Mike has a genuine concern for those in our community who are in need and a willingness to do something about it while preserving total confidentiality. He acts with empathy and without judgement, demonstrating patience, kindness and compassion. He has the ability to remain calm and motivated in challenging and unfamiliar environments. Mike builds rapport in a respectful manner with people from a range of backgrounds and cultures. His passion for social justice shines through his work.

The team culture that exists within the Peakhurst Conference can be attributed to Mike's positive and supportive leadership. Members are continually inspired by his example of genuine, humble service.

Volunteering requires commitment, reliability and above all passion. It is Mike's passion to help those in need that drives his commitment to St Vincent de Paul. It is this passion and personal attachment that has motivated others to join the Conference or generally support the work. While Mike's volunteer work has been with those suffering on the fringes of the local community, it is these efforts that have made our community as a whole significantly better.

Frances Greene and Camille Philips, St Vincent de Paul Peakhurst Conference.



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works



Dear fellow parishioners,

In my wildest dreams I never would have imagined I would ever win this award. In fact, when I received the call from Georges River Council, I thought it was a scam and almost hung up.

I am extremely humbled and grateful to receive the award, which really belongs to the members of Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst St Vincent de Paul Conference past and present, who have been my friends and fellow Vincentians for the last 21 years. I share the award with my greatest supporter, my wife Toni, who has stuck with me through the ups and downs of life and of Vinnies!

I wish to thank the people who nominated me and went through all the hoops to submit the nomination.

Of course, our Vinnies Conference would not be able to operate without the continuing support of Our Lady of Fatima Parish. I thank Father Tony and our priests, the Leadership Team, Catholic Women's League and other ministries and all the church volunteers and Clarissa for the assistance you provide.

In particular, I feel we are blessed to have so many generous parishioners who respond to our Vinnies' Christmas, Winter and Disaster appeals, by donating money and goods for those in need, which fund our activities to assist the less fortunate in our community in the true spirit of St Vincent de Paul.

Toni and I feel privileged to be part of such a wonderful parish, surrounded by so many caring and compassionate people.

Mike Flanagan

Sabbatical done well

You may remember the article in the December 2023 issue of *The Bark* regarding the “Visitations and Saints” pilgrimage which Father Brian accompanied through Portugal, Spain and France at the end of last year. This was the first part of his Sabbatical—the time taken by MGL priests every ten years for spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological renewal.

Father Brian has recently returned to our parishes having completed another part of this time of renewal and again has generously shared some of his experiences with *The Bark*.

Revisiting two places where he has served as a Missionary of God’s Love in the past proved to be rewarding choices. Returning to Manila where he had lived from 2006 to 2014, Father Brian experienced the joy of reconnecting with many people he had known, especially those in the group “Youth Alive” that he had established. Seeing them as adults with children of their own and still very committed to their faith, parish and, in many cases, working with today’s youth, was a great validation of his years in St Benedict’s Parish in Manila. One of the 18-year-old current members of the youth group, Chloe, approached Fr Brian to ask if he remembered her. Not surprisingly, he did not recognise her as he had baptised her as a baby! She is now a leader of “Youth Alive”; an expanded group which is now more missionary based than parish based, offering catechesis and fellowship to many.

The youth group holds a Summer School each May, going to different regions and providing food, helping to build chapels and other projects which are practical demonstrations of their faith. The alumni of the group help out with sponsorship of the youth activities. Fr Brian was pleased to be able to attend “Youth Alive” and give them some ‘pep’ talks. He was surprised but very gratified that the icebreaker activity and theme hymn (The Power of Your Love) are still in regular use.

Alumni of the original “Youth Alive” group invited Fr Brian into their homes and he was overjoyed to spend time with them and the ‘grandkids’ – an emotionally uplifting experience.

As well as the two weeks spent at the MGL Formation House, Fr Brian also experienced the generous hospitality of some St Benedict’s parishioners and had time to be a tourist and to physically relax and be restored.

Following his month in the Philippines, Fr Brian had a different but also very rewarding return visit to Darwin where he had served with the MGLs from 2015 – 2020, working with the indigenous community of St Martins and establishing a youth group there. Known for its charism of healing, peace and blessings, returning to this community gave Fr Brian a sense of coming home to a sacred place.

This indigenous community has a covenant relationship with the MGL Parish of Holy Spirit, Casuarina, with special Masses being celebrated as well as times of hospitality and healing. Fr Brian’s return to this special community was filled with moments of grace – truly revitalising. He also greatly enjoyed spending time with Fr Adam Crouch who is now the chaplain for St Martins and who has just renewed his position there for a further three years.

Reflecting on these most recent sabbatical experiences, Fr Brian mentioned that visiting remote missions such as Manila and Darwin made him think about his (and others’) role in being a link between Australia and the MGL communities of priests, aspirants (those considering the priesthood) and those they serve.

Welcome home Fr Brian – we missed you!

The Power of Your Love

Lord I come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I've found in You
Lord I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love

Hold me close
Let Your love surround me
Bring me near
Draw me to Your side
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love

Lord unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me
Lord renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
By the power of Your love

Tourist tips

Bark also took the opportunity to ask Fr Brian for some suggestions for sightseeing in and around Manila. These are his top picks:

- Cagayan de Oro – City of Gold which is situated south of Manila in Northern Mindanao — visit the Shrine of Divine Mercy which is a 50 ft (over 12 metres) high statue of Jesus. There you can walk up 100 steps to the heart of Jesus and enter the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament resides.
- The Benedictine Monastery of Transfiguration in Malababay which looks like huge tents – inspired by the Bible passage "Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.'"
- Subic where the remnants of the former US Naval Base is a Free Port Zone and offers an ordered and relatively peaceful contrast to the busyness of Manila.
- Tagaytay – a pineapple plantation with a volcano in the middle of the lake. Fr Brian said that you can feel the rumbles of volcanic activity under your feet.



It is in giving that we receive....

The people of Our Lady of Fatima Parish Peakhurst has once again demonstrated their willingness to 'love one another' as they gathered a few weeks ago to support the work of the School of St Jude in Tanzania.

As you will imagine, the preparation for this event takes time and considerable effort. The team from St Jude's, headed by Gemma Sisia, visits Australia for one month each year, undertaking an exhausting round of speaking engagements to generate financial support for their primary, secondary and post-secondary students. Thanks to the initiative of Emma Williams, we were able to be included in this year's visit.

As soon as the **Lending a Hand Team** announced the upcoming High Tea, we were inundated with requests for tickets. In the end, we decided that the parish centre could only comfortably accommodate 120 people for the event so unfortunately some people missed attending a heart-warming and uplifting afternoon. While the majority of attendees were OLF parishioners, there were some sponsors of St Jude's students who took the opportunity to see Gemma at our event.

John Dowd's article "Inspiration," in this issue of **The Bark**, gives a wonderful insight into the work of Gemma Sisia, founder of the School of St Jude, which has grown from 3 students in 2002 to over 1800 students in three schools today, as well as students being supported through university courses.

While raising funds for such a worthwhile cause is a primary focus for the **Lending a Hand Team**, we also aim to provide parishioners with an opportunity to learn about the projects we support and the amazing people who make their vision of a better, fairer world into reality.

Another reason for planning events like the High Tea is the prospect of bringing together so many of our parishioners – the buzz of conversation, laughter and sense of community in the parish centre was uplifting.

Not only did our parish rise to the occasion in buying tickets to the event and, of course, purchasing multiple raffle tickets, but many offered to assist with the catering for the event – there's not many communities that offer to provide food and are then willing to pay to eat it!

The **Lending a Hand Team** were up to the task however – with some help from Lugarno Bakery for delicious scones and Denise McKiernan who very kindly provided gluten-free treats.

So 120 people sat down to sandwiches, scones with jam and cream (or cream and jam if that was the preference!) and a range of slices, cupcakes and rocky road – all with a cup or two of tea or coffee.

Gemma's talk and accompanying video clips provided real insight into the history and work of St Jude's which was enhanced by the testimonies of Sulieman and Winnie, past students of St Jude's, who accompanied Gemma.

The Lending a Hand Team is very grateful to all those who attended and all those who support our projects in so many ways. \$2,500 was raised from ticket sales, donations and raffle, and combined with \$1,000 from Lending A Hand funds, provided a total donation of \$3,500 that has been sent to St Jude's from OLF Peakhurst to support these most-deserving students.

If you would like to know more, the website of St Jude's <https://www.schoolofstjude.org/> is detailed and engaging. Below is a short excerpt:

[In 2002](#), The School of St Jude opened with one teacher and a handful of sponsored students.

Today, The School of St Jude is a pioneering leader in charitable education within Africa. We provide free, quality education to 1,800 bright primary and secondary students who come from considerably poor backgrounds. We provide them with everything they need for a successful education, ensuring our students' well-being and future success. Located across three campuses, we provide boarding for all secondary students and employ around 300 Tanzanian staff.

97% of St Jude's secondary graduates go on to access higher education, supported by **Beyond St Jude's** or by other means. Through **Beyond St Jude's**, our program for secondary graduates, we support 100s of graduates with access to higher education and provide more than 20,000 government school students with volunteer teachers each year.

100% of St Jude's students and scholars are on scholarships.

Our vision

An educated community of moral and intellectual leaders; fighting poverty in Tanzania.

Our mission

Our mission is to give bright, poor Tanzanian students a free, quality education so they can lead their family, community and country with Respect, Responsibility, Honesty and Kindness to growth and prosperity.



So many smiling faces and such delicious treats! Thank you OLF!



INSPIRATION!

A few weeks ago I called Julia Goff to say I was thinking of submitting an article for *The Bark* but had no inspiration. She said, "Just wait". So I did and, sure enough, the inspiration arrived in heaps on Saturday March 2 at 2pm.

This was the *Lending a Hand's* High Tea with Gemma Sisia. From the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales, this young woman left Australia in 2002 for Tanzania and, with little financial support, was able to change the lives of thousands of young children by starting a school which commenced with three students and now has 1800!

I would imagine that all those present at her talk came away amazed and uplifted by her presentation and the demonstration of her courage, faith and tenacity. How did one young woman achieve so much in such a short time? Obviously, she has had tremendous generous support to be able to achieve so much and also wonderful people around her. Her presence at OLF, thanks to the *Lending a Hand Team*, may inspire many of us to support such a wonderful woman. Let's pray her work continues to flourish.

Gemma's talk and presence was not the only source of inspiration for me that day. Before Gemma was introduced, Emma Williams outlined some of the projects that the *Lending a Hand Team* had carried out over the last eighteen years! That was an inspiration in itself and someone mentioned that the list Emma read out was only some of the projects! Just listening to Emma's listing made me very proud to be part of a parish that had such an extraordinary group of men and women who have contributed generously to helping those in need. What they do and have done is true Christianity and where Jesus would be—on the margins! As a parish, we are so blessed to have groups like *Lending a Hand* as well as St Vincent de Paul, CWL and Friendship.

I know that the group might be somewhat embarrassed in my listing their names but I will do it anyway! Tony Thorpe (Chair), Daniel Craven, Deb Cummins, Julia Goff, John and Sharran Horan, Paul and Robyn Napier, Camille Philips, Kent Scrymgeour and Emma Williams. So, thank you one and all for what you have done and are doing. Your tireless work makes us all proud.

John Dowd

Friendship group

We are well into 2024 and "our house" is full and all our guests are excited to be back; not even the hot weather can deter them from attending.

Our oldest guest, Margaret Ferra, turned 96 in February. Happy Birthday Margaret!

Our Easter Raffle will be sold at or next gathering on 14 March.

Our thoughts and prayers are being offered for one of our drivers, Maureen O'Sullivan, who is undertaking medical treatment as well as facing a major operation at the end of March.

Annette Dunn and Pat Pfoeffler, Friendship Group

**Friendship
improves happiness,
and abates misery,
by doubling our joys,
and dividing our grief**



MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO



Vinnies in action

Ever wondered what sort of scenarios we encounter on a Vinnies call out?

A few weeks ago we received a request from our Hurstville branch to visit a 32 year old man who was new to the area and had just moved into a bedsitter in Riverwood. We gave him a call and had a chat over the phone and arranged to pop in to his place the following morning. He had asked if we might be able to bring some groceries but let us know that he didn't have a fridge, kettle, toaster or anything much in the way of pots and pans.

Keeping this in mind we packed up a bag of groceries on the Saturday morning. Peakhurst Vinnies has a food pantry stocked with groceries that we buy or are donated, which we keep in the parish house. So loaded up with cereal, long-life milk, tinned meals, tea, coffee (he had told me he was using his one pot on the stove to boil water), we headed down to say g'day. This bloke was a lovely fellow who had found it really hard to ask for help.

When we went inside the bedsitter, we were a bit struck about just how small it was. All he had in there was a mattress on the floor, one dining chair and a small TV. We had both noticed that he had a litre of milk sitting out on the bench.

Firstly, we gave him a voucher for the Vinnies shop in Riverwood. With this he was able to get some plates, bowls, utensils and pans. Next, we set about trying to see how we could best help get him set up so that he might feel like his little house was a home; and thereby help him to get on his feet. We knew we had access to a donated fridge, microwave, kettle and TV stand. We quickly grabbed the One Meal van and used it to collect and deliver these items back to our very grateful client. On the Sunday we were able to find him a small second-hand lounge that was delivered and certainly made a difference to the space.



Finally, through Vinnies stores, we ordered this struggling young bloke a single bed, mattress, doona, sheets, pillows and doona cover which was delivered by the Tuesday.

This is but one example of how tough people are doing it and how little they may have. It is through the generosity of the donations to our Vinnies Conference at Peakhurst that we are able to make a significant difference to real people living right on our doorstep.

Brett and Emma Williams, Peakhurst Vinnies Conference

Packing so much in...

Bank readers will know that the **Lending a Hand Team** has been involved in supporting the activities of Eurella Community Services at Burwood over recent years. We have helped them out with client activities including walkathons/wheelathons (providing barbecue lunches) and have attended art shows and performances showcasing the wonderful achievements of their attendees who live with a range of disabilities.

For some time, we have been interested in finding out more about other aspects of Eurella's work. On Friday 1 March, members of OLF's Lending a Hand Team, accompanied by Fr Tony, visited Eurella's Supported Employment business at Auburn. Here, in a factory unit, many of Eurella's clients are employed to carry out packaging of a multitude of products on a commercial basis.

Bree, who manages the business, took time to explain to us how she tenders for packing contracts (a very competitive process) and sets up teams to work on each job. It was a real eye-opener to see just how many items that we buy regularly are packaged by Eurella!

Projects range from filling bags of dog food and sealing them, to multi-part packaging which might involve wrapping four or five mini beauty products in tissue paper, putting them into a gift bag with a folded product information notice and attaching a tag.

A job board (shown below) uses pictures and minimal writing to indicate the urgency and size of jobs.

Skills required are diverse and include patience(!), the ability to read a scale accurately, using a range of machinery and operating a hand-driven forklift to load and unload trucks.

The benefits of employment at Eurella's business services are many. Clients of Eurella are assisted to develop on-the-job skills and can access a range of training courses in areas including processes and procedures, using technology, self-advocacy, rights, workplace essentials, safety in the workplace building positive communications, and much more.

Staff told the **Lending a Hand Team** of one of the major challenges they have – getting their clients to take holidays. The structure of attending work, being part of a team and earning some money to supplement their NDIS payments is life-affirming. Each and every person we spoke to was so glad to be there; it was a joy to experience the positivity of this workplace.

We look forward to learning more about Eurella and looking for ways to support this amazing organisation as they support those who need it so much.

Julia Goff, Lending a Hand



CWL – Sharing the love

The Peakhurst Branch of the Catholic Women's League (CWL) started 2024 off with lunch at Grandviews. We also celebrated Annette Dunn's 80th Birthday. Paul Napier was our guest speaker and gave a very informative talk on his work as a counsellor with Fr Chris Riley and the prison system.

At our City Meeting, our guest speaker was the CEO of Hotel Etico, Mount Victoria. This hotel is Australia's first social enterprise hotel offering internships for people with intellectual disabilities, enabling them to transition to open employment and become independent. The students help with the running of the hotel's accommodation and Niccolo's Restaurant and Bar. <https://hoteletico.com.au/>

On 1 March we attended World Day of Prayer hosted by Lugarno and Peakhurst Uniting Church. Many thanks to those who attended from our parish.

We are collecting much-loved Rosary Beads, used stamps and bread tags. Please leave these in the Piety Stall. Our Silver Circle will be on again this year over June and July. All ladies are welcome to join our group.

Maureen Burgess and Pat Pfoeffler, CWL



SISTERS

A young wife sat on a sofa on a hot, humid day, drinking iced tea and visiting with her mother. As they talked about life, marriage, responsibilities of life and obligations of adulthood, the mother clinked the ice cubes in her glass thoughtfully and turned a clear, sober glance on her daughter.

"Don't forget your sisters", she advised, twirling the tea leaves in the bottom of her glass. "They'll be more important as you get older. No matter how much you love your husband, no matter how much you love the children you may have, you are still going to need sisters. Remember to go places with them now and then, do things with them. "Remember that 'sisters' means ALL the women. Your girlfriends, your daughters, and all your other

women relatives too. You need other women. Women always do."

What a funny piece of advice, the young woman thought. "Haven't I just got married? Haven't I just joined the 'couple world'? I'm now a married woman for goodness sake! A grown up! Surely my husband and the family we may start will be all I need to make my life worthwhile?"

But she listened to her mother. She kept contact with her sisters and made more women friends each year. As the years tumbled by, one after another, she gradually came to understand that her mum really knew what she was talking about. As time and nature work their changes and their mysteries upon a woman, sisters are the mainstays of her life.

This says it all: time passes; life happens, distance separates, children grow up, jobs come and go, love waxes and wanes, men don't always do what they are supposed to do, hearts break, parents die, colleagues forget favours, careers end BUT... sisters are there, no matter how much time and how many miles are between you. A girl friend is never further away than needing her can reach. When you have to walk that lonesome valley and you have to walk it by yourself, the women in your life will be on the valley's rim, cheering you on, praying for you, pulling for you, intervening on your behalf and waiting with open arms at the valley's end.

Sometimes, they will even break the rules and walk

beside you...or come in and carry you. Girlfriends, daughters, granddaughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, mothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers, aunts, nieces, cousins and extended family, all bless our lives.

The world wouldn't be the same without women. When we began this adventure called womanhood, we had no idea of the incredible joys or sorrows that lay ahead. Nor did we know how much we could need each other. Every day, we need each other still.

**Contributed by Marlene Wallace, from the
Parramatta CWL's newsletter
"The Branch" - May 2010**

Beetle mania!

Early one Monday morning in January we discovered that the parish site had been quite literally invaded by an absolute onslaught of soldier beetles; everywhere we looked they had taken up residence in the thousands!

When it was found early the next morning that the critters had started to penetrate the church and were coming in through window cracks and under the doors, it was time to call in the pest controllers who swiftly took control of the situation.

Known as *chauliognathus lugubris* or, more commonly as the green soldier beetle, they are a species of beetle native to Australia. According to the CSIRO "they often swarm in large localised groups around flora such as shrubs and trees. The swarms commonly include hundreds of thousands of beetles."

Thanks to Clarissa and the maintenance team for swinging into action to get these unexpected visitors evicted.

Emma Williams



THE SEARCH EXPERIENCE

I'd been watching the trailer of *The Search* for a couple of Sundays after Mass. I knew it was something I wanted to do but wasn't sure I was ready right now to commit fully.

Although born, raised and always a practicing Catholic, I did sometimes feel I was living on the periphery of my religion.

A few days before the July 2022 *The Search* was to begin I happened to pick up randomly and read:

“Go through the narrow gate,
because the gate to hell is wide
and the road that leads to it is
easy and there are many who travel it.
But the gate to life is narrow and the way that
leads to it is hard and there are few people who
find it.
I am the way, the truth and the life; no one goes
to the Father except by me” Matthew, John

I knew then it was the gate to life I was looking for. Embarking on *The Search* journey was the Way for me. I immediately registered.

The Search exceeded all my expectations. The videos were thought provoking (fabulous) and engaged all in our group with critical thinking, problem solving and wonderful, gentle communication.

The Search fostered a great sense of friendship amongst us beginning the evening with a meal and conversations of our week. It has since provided life-long connections.

During *The Search* I experienced a renewed appreciation of the Holy Spirit. Now I am fully aware of the Spirit that enlightens, guides and encourages me in my everyday life. A life I can navigate with more clarity.

If these are questions you're asking:
“What do you seek”
“Who are you”

then *The Search* IS for you.

Writing this, I'm on vacation looking out to the South Pacific Ocean, in particular, Doubtful Sound, and can't help but give gratitude for the blessings in my life of which I am more aware by embarking on *The Search*.

Gina Whiley



FORGIVENESS AND THE FAMILY

Pope Francis' message from the General Audience, 25 March 2011

There is no perfect family. We do not have perfect parents, we are not perfect, we do not marry a perfect person or have perfect children.

We have complaints from each other. We disappoint each other. So, there is no healthy marriage or healthy family without the exercise of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is vital to our emotional health and spiritual survival. Without forgiveness the family becomes an arena of conflict and a stronghold of hurt.

Without forgiveness, the family becomes ill. Forgiveness is the asepsis of the soul, the cleansing of the mind and the liberation of the heart.

Whoever does not forgive does not have peace in the soul nor communion with God. Hurt is poison that intoxicates and kills.

Keeping heartache in the heart is a self-destructive gesture. It's autophagy. Those who do not forgive are physically, emotionally and spiritually ill.

Parents are the children's source of life. They are there to protect their sons and daughters and not to compete with them.

That is why the family must be a place of life, not of death; territory of cure and not of illness; stage of forgiveness and not guilt. Forgiveness brings joy where sorrow has produced sadness; healing, where sorrow has caused disease.

Contributed by Anne-Marie Ucilizas

This March 2024 issue of **The Bark** is brought to you by:

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How to contribute to the Bark

Articles: please submit your articles as a Word document (not as a pdf.) or as hand-written copy. Articles may be edited for reasons of space; you will be given an opportunity to review your work before publication if this occurs.

Photographs: please submit medium /high resolution photos with captions provided.

Send your articles or suggestions via email to Julia Goff at goffam1@optusnet.com.au or call 0412 809 313.

Bark 2024

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