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Prayer & Spirituality Department – Letter 2/ 2007

Dear Friends,

We are already into Autumn – a beautiful season with slight coolness in Rockhampton. I have just returned from the northern hemisphere late Spring. I was visiting our daughter, son in law and little granddaughter, Jessica, in Seattle. It was first birthday time! Flying home from Los Angeles is always through the night and I find it an experience of wonder to look out at those northern hemisphere stars and then to come to the south and the familiar sight of the Southern Cross.

I had no time to recover from jet lag on arrival home! It was straight into our Diocesan synod, a wonderful diocesan catch-up time. In addition, our first family of refugees arrived in Rockhampton to be settled – a family of 9! The family, mother, father and 7 children come from the Democratic Republic of Congo and are remarkable people. They have come through terrible trauma with enormous courage and miraculous resilience. The early weeks of settlement are extremely intense in many many ways. Kiswahili and French are their two major languages and I am finding that I remember more of my school-learnt French than I thought I did! It is such rewarding work. I read with interest in the latest copy of *MIA MIA* of the work happening with refugees in Newcastle. My journey over the 15 years I have been involved in refugee settlement has been one of many learnings - putting off my own cultural”shoes” and understanding where another person stands.

Since my last letter you will have received the Easter leaflet and the prayer diaries. I am finding this year is one of learning about the timing of mailouts. More time I realise would be better for many of you as you deliver in your dioceses. I will be working on it!

Thank you all for many different communications over the past months. I appreciate the literature you send outlining your work. I can see that much thought and time is put into your work. Great things are happening. It all helps me to get to understand your contexts and your lives a little better. I pray for you all.

Changes

Merle Fitzpatrick has become the Diocesan Co-ordinator for Canberra & Goulburn. Thank you to **Anne Downing** for carrying on the work in the meantime. **Rae Hunt** is in her first year as co-ordinator in Brisbane. In my last letter I omitted to mention Grafton’s new co-ordinator is **Joan Norman**. In Sydney, after six years **Glenda McSorley** has retired from the P&S role (to take on another in the Diocese!). **Kath Brown** is the new co-ordinator. Welcome to all the new “incumbents”. We wish you every blessing as you take up the task.

Australia Council

Preparations are beginning for this important meeting in Melbourne in early November. I have received many of your 2006 Annual reports. If you have not sent yours could you please ensure it reaches me as soon as possible so that I can report comprehensively on our Department at AC. We need to submit our reports for AC by 1st August at the latest.

Leaflet Accounts

I enclose with this letter the Account for leaflets (or it may have been sent to your Diocesan treasurer). For those who have received the Circular letter via email I will send your individual Leaflet Account attached to a separate email.

Mary Sumner Day

As you know we celebrate this day on 9th August. Who would be a modern day equivalent of Mary Sumner? A visionary, one who saw a need and was willing to begin in a small local way. And not without some trepidation. Apparently when she called together the first gathering of young mothers from the village where she lived, she was so nervous that her husband had to stand in for her inviting the ladies back the following week! I attach (or send) a simple liturgy for use on that day.

Curl up with a book!

Here are a few recommendations.

In Search of the Lost by Richard Carter, is the story of the seven Melanesian Martyrs of 2003. British priest Richard Carter, a fellow member of the Melanesian Brotherhood, lived through the tragedy and has written about its impact on the community in this just published book. It can be purchased through the ABM-A office in Sydney.

Toward God by Michael Casey, prior of Tarrawarra Abbey in Victoria. In a most readable style, this is a book which explores the journey toward God in prayer, approaching prayer not as an “activity” but as a way of life.

Cecil the Sheep and others in the **Lost Sheep** series –obtainable through the MU publication Department. Such fun! These versions of the Parables of Jesus are vividly illustrated, and written in a very lively style. Great gifts for grandchildren. I was most taken with the name of one of the shepherd’s flock of sheep – “Bronwyn”!!

Mr Golightly’s Holiday by Sally Vickers, the author of *Miss Garnet’s Angel*. Much food for thought in this earthy treatment of the complexity of human relationships. It is a book which tackles theological questions in a modern setting.

I am really looking forward to meeting many MU members and possibly P&S coordinators at the MU State Conference/Retreat in Melbourne next month.

Finally, I finish with some words from Michael Casey’s book:

We do not produce prayer. During prayer time we do not attempt to initiate a relationship with God; that relationship already exists. Prayer is an attempt to realize the love that unites us with God, allow it to become more present in us, and give it greater scope to act upon and to change us. We do not produce prayer. We allow prayer to act. [Toward God – p33.]

With love and my continuing prayers,

Bronwyn