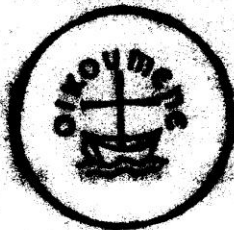


# Australian Church Women

## WOMEN AT WORK



**AIM:** To unite Australian women in their allegiance to their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

To help Christian women to take more effective place in the total life and mission of the Church.

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### THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

May, 1983.

In our society phrases become a catchery - a current one is "The Signs of the Times." You hear it from politicians, the pulpit, the man in the street. I was at a talk recently on "Renewal", and the speaker said that today we should hold in one hand the Word of God and in the other the daily paper. But we mustn't try to read the Gospels in the light of the signs of the times, but rather the signs of the times in the light of the Gospels.

Newspapers and television disturb us with their graphic and explicit descriptions of major catastrophes - plane crashes, bushfires, droughts etc., and the miseries of people such as the street kids of St. Kilda and the Vietnam veteran unable to care for his most elementary needs. The Gospels too record contemporary disasters. Luke records that Pilate, the military governor had massacred tourist Galileans as they attended worship in the national temple at Jerusalem. Galileans embarrassed sophisticated Jerusalem because they brought an irreverent provincial attitude to the holy city where everything, including religion, was regulated for the sake of the law and order. Luke also records Jesus' reference to a local natural disaster - a building that collapsed killing innocent bystanders.

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The signs of the times can depress and horrify us, and we feel powerless against such odds. But reflect - God's amazing grace can enable us to respond to the best of our ability. By developing the virtues of faith, hope and charity, we can prepare ourselves to see the signs of the times in the light of the Gospels, and our trust in God will triumph.

Berna Foster  
Associate Secretary, National  
Working Committee

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A letter received from Lyn Meadows, Convenor of the Fellowship of the Least Coin of Queensland Unit :-

"Mary Garoll, from Catholic Women's Association, Director of Mamrie, and I made a week's programme for epilogue for T.V. for Channel 9, to be shown at 6 a.m. and 12 midnight for the first week in May. Father McLachlan, Media - of the Roman Catholic Church interviewed us, firstly, Mary, who talked about the work of Mamrie and then I answered his questions about F.L.C. The F.L.C. grant cheque was presented to Mary for Mamrie, which is, 'Family support for handicapped children'."

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A LETTER

Recently a letter from the Philippines was delivered to a Hobart home. It was no ordinary letter telling of the vagaries of the weather, of Johnny's latest school report or the concert that was recently attended.

Indeed it was a poignant segment of current Asian history written to a friend by one whose heart overflowed with gratitude. It began :

"At last I am out of prison! When we got the news of my release at Camp Crane, all of us jumped and hugged each other with joy and then tears rolled down like a river. It was a time for rejoicing, yet tears fell because of the pangs of separation. We had gone fasting and then went on a hunger strike for 20 days for our release and for just demands in prison. To be released from prison is everyone's priority, yet I left with a heavy heart because I knew the others too should be released like me.

I stepped out of jail on my 44th. birthday -- the date was January 4, 1983, at about 6.30 p.m. From Camp Crane, together with my mother and my five children, we went directly to my office at the NCCP (National Council of Churches in the Philippines). There we celebrated my birthday and my release; there was so much joy, so much love and food that I feasted 'til my stomach hurt.

I should have written to you all right away, but there was so much to do, so many things to adjust to and so many friends and relatives coming to greet me and welcome me to the new world. After ten months and eight days in prison, the world

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outside seemed so big and so overwhelming. I hope you will forgive me for the delay, I am now back working at the Council and I hope I will be able to make up for the suspended work here.

I take this opportunity to thank all who have visited me in prison and who have remembered me in your prayers. To all who have sent beautiful Christmas cards, notes, letters, cablegrams and petitions affirming your unqualified support for me and the others who are victims of injustice and whose human rights have been violated, my appreciation and thanks. I praise the Lord for people like you who are in solidarity with us in our fight for freedom and justice. I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to stand as witness for truth, for putting me in a situation that challenged my faith in Him who is the source of all goodness and truth, so that I could become one with the least of His brethren in their struggle to regain the image of God in every person in any situation.

I most especially thank God because in prison He has shown me that if we are with Christ no one, but no one, can be against us. I felt Him and saw Him in all of you who have served as my inspiration. You have strengthened me in time of weakness, frustration and anxieties.

Oh Rachel, the Lord has shown me great things, I have learned many things in prison. God is really with us always !!

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So my dear friends, I am out at last but not really free! For as long as there are those who languish in jail because of their commitment to defend and protect the image of God in every person, for as long as there is injustice and gross violation of human rights anywhere, we are not really free. There is so much to do, but together we are a powerful witness. My family and I thank you all for the love, care and concern shown us, while I was in detention.

Love, justice and peace,

Violet A. Marasigan."

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#### PEACE

What kind of peace are we to pray for? When I was in Manila for Fellowship of the Least Coin Jubilee celebration women from the Third World who attended this celebration, asked me if I would ask their sisters in Australia to join in prayer with them for peace. This I have done, now almost two years later I am wondering what the response here in Australia has been to this plea from women of the Third World.

Peace is more than absence of conflict, although that is a condition much desired. It is a presence of well being of "Shalom" Christ's peace. For over two thousand years women have been "weeping" because of oppression, being dispossessed and hungry. "Shalom" is an ancient Hebrew word used to mean wholeness, the right relationships among people and God.

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"Shalom" is a whole community, where no one is hungry, homeless, or an outcast or mistreated - a whole community of Shalom means abundance, liberation. A public as well as a private peace.

Christ is the world's peace, He and no other; no one can serve Him and despise their neighbour.

"Shalom"

Fran Downes,  
National Convenor  
Fellowship of the Least Coin

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VICTORIAN UNIT HAS A "QUIET DAY"

Sister Patricia Madigan, President, A.C.W. VIC. UNIT, arranged a "Quiet Day" for members and friends at St. Mary's College, Melbourne on Friday, 29th. April, 1983, from 9.30 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. After preliminary fellowship over tea and coffee, Patricia spoke of her experiences of Quiet times and also told us something of her faith journey. She presented reflections on "Stillness of Heart" and the importance of listening to God.

We were then given about one hour in which to meditate in silence -- we could remain in the hall or go into the garden or chapel. To help us to focus our thoughts, Patricia had prepared a sheet of excerpts from the Psalms, and a reflection on John 7:37 and living water. We were asked to select the text with which we identified most closely and think about what that text was saying for us today.

After this time of silence we returned to the hall and sat in a circle to share our reflections. Lunch was

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an informal sharing in threes and fours at a more personal level. The final segment of the day was a time of silence as we viewed an audio visual "Be still and know that I am God" -- a series of slides showing many aspects of daily life with the background music of this hymn. After this time of meditation individual prayers of petition were offered by anyone who felt moved to do so.

The day brought us very close as we probed the depths of our own hearts and shared together in a very intimate caring group. We felt God had been with us - bonding us together.

Reflection Sheet - Texts from Psalms.

My body pines for you like a dry weary land without water.  
On you I muse all through the night. (Psalm 62)

One thing I long for - to live in the house of the Lord.  
It is your face, O Lord, that I seek. (Psalm 26)

My soul is longing for the Lord  
more than watchmen for daybreak. (Psalm 120)

In God alone is my soul at rest; my help comes from  
the Lord. (Psalm 61)

Some trust in chariots or horses, but we in the name  
of the Lord. (Psalm 19)

In my anguish I cried for help. God is the rock where  
I take refuge.  
You, O God, are the lamp of my darkness.  
With you I can break any barrier.  
God is indeed a shield to all who take refuge in  
the Lord. (Psalm 17)

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O that I had wings like a dove to fly away and be at rest!  
Entrust your cares to the Lord  
And God will support you. (Psalm 54)

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SPECIAL MESSAGE

DELEGATES TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Saturday 20th. August, 1983 - You may be interested in staying an extra day and attending a one day workshop -- 9.30 to 4.30 p.m.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN AND MEN IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY  
Mrs. Sydney Brown and her husband Robert Macafee Brown will conduct this at Queens College, Parkville.

Note - you would need to arrange accommodation -- If you are interested contact Olive Ackland.

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NEWS FROM KNOX COMMUNITY RELATIONS CENTRE - VICTORIA

They are excited because they have just received funding from the U.C.A. SHARE APPEAL and from the Government Unemployment Initiative Scheme to do some work in two areas of concern to women.

1. Domestic Violence
2. Development of Positive Self Image in Teenage Girls.

We are hoping to visit this centre during the National Committee Meeting and hear something of their programmes.

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