



*Photo by Marek Studzinski on Unsplash*

## **To Autumn**

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

**by John Keats**

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## PUBLICATIONS

### ***Global Justice Overcoming Poverty Bulletin***

4 pages of short up-to-date reports and articles. Issued bi-monthly from January.

To receive a copy, contact [info@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)

Available by email or by post if necessary.

### ***Pacific Outlook Bulletin***

4 pages on economic, social and environmental issues of the small island nations of the Pacific. Issues bi-monthly from February.

To receive a free copy, contact [info@grailaustralia.org.au](mailto:info@grailaustralia.org.au)

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## NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

### Melbourne News

Amidst the hectic days and alarming events of recent times, the Melbourne group continues to find calm and solidarity in our regular *Lectio Divina* gatherings in one another's homes. We are drawing inspiration from Richard Rohr in *Yes, and...A Year of Daily Meditation*, a compilation from the Centre for Action and Contemplation. Through Rohr's words, we are both challenged and sustained as we share in the concerns faced by our regular group of eleven. Currently, Ann Niall is awaiting an operation in the Alfred Hospital following a fall, Genny Grabau is recovering from a series of health concerns and Irena Dunn has just moved into care at St Vincent's in Kew.

We were saddened at the death of Rita Flipo on 27th January. Rita had an early history in the Grail and an enriching and faith-filled life in various community groups. In her later years, Rita was a delightful and insightful presence at our lectio meetings before needing to move into St Catherine's residential care. Organised by her niece Monique and other family members, Rita's requiem mass was a beautiful celebration of her life. Following the service, Dinny, Genny and Andrea were pleased to meet up with friends from Rita's years in the Yarra Valley, including Leo Kelly and Christine Reynolds.

In appropriate synchronicity, we held a joyful farewell for Carol Farmer on St Patrick's Day at Andrea's. To conclude our lectio, we prayed St Patrick's Breastplate to send her safely on her new journey to northern New South Wales where Carol is taking on private tutoring as a new venture. A festive lunch rounded out the event. Thankfully, Carol survived inundation from the wild storms just days

after arrival in her new abode. May better days follow!

After maintaining contact with Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School over recent years, The Grail was invited to join in Strathcona's 100th anniversary celebrations held at *Tay Creggan* in Hawthorn in March. A time capsule was unearthed, which had been buried on the 100th anniversary (1993) of the building of the original *Tay Creggan* Tudor house (1893).



This lovely Tudor house formerly belonged to the Archdiocese of Melbourne and was used for Grail activities. It provided accommodation and training for young women and an adult education centre for the wider community, from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.

Following addresses from present and former principals and musical interludes, we adjourned to the Tudor house for refreshments, an historical display, and a tour of the buildings.





Mary McCormick, Dinny Culican, Ann Niall, Genny Grabau and Andrea Venier enjoyed discussing The Grail's contribution to the site and were impressed with the strong values being carried on in the education of the girls there.

Reminiscences from our members, in particular Mary and Dinny, will be included in the school's anniversary magazine.

In early April, Genny and Andrea spent an enjoyable afternoon with Helen Jeffcott during an interlude from her attendance at the annual quilting exhibition.

We had the opportunity to discuss plans for the visit of the ILT in December. We look forward to spending time and sharing our insights with them, hoping to impart some uniquely Australian perspectives.

*Andrea Venier*

## Brisbane News

**Rempi to Rebiamul.** Mary Mennis invited us to attend Mass on Sunday 14 April at St Dympha's, Aspley to commemorate Father William Ross and the first missionaries' trek into the highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG) with 70 local porters in 1934. Mary talked of the challenges they faced illustrated by original photos. Then the PNG choir were drummed into the church to begin Mass. Many attendees wore clothes with 1975 printed on them, honouring PNG's Independence Day and some had their faces painted. They looked great. Bishop Tim Norton celebrated the Mass flanked by Father Paul and Father Jacob from PNG. A sumptuous feast followed with traditional food which was delicious.

Maggie Jenatsh and her family were in their element and were joined by other Grail women & invited friends– the church was packed. We acknowledged 80 recent pilgrims who followed the same trek into the Highlands based on the map that Mary

drew with help from local people and published in her book *Rempi to Rebiamul: Missions from Madang to Mt.Hagen 1896-2016* and other books she has written on this subject.

**Milan to Bolzano** and beyond. Helen and her daughter Olwen have not long returned from a trip to the Dolomites in Italy where they took a cable car, a train and 'shanks pony' to see the earth pyramids. Who knew? They passed many lovely small roadside shrines and marvelled at the stations of the cross on some of them.

**St Lucia to St Ignatius & Holy Family Churches in Brisbane,** Ann travelled a much shorter distance to meet Louise Wellington from St Ignatius Parish to explore Grail partnering opportunities for 2024. Father Frank Brennan will speak on Synodality in May, and we hope to partner at this event. The Women of Spirituality night will be held again this year. Very exciting also is a proposed history project of the area and the 'Elder flowering' series. The latter will look at the inner graces of ageing i.e. wisdom, spiritual beauty, discernment, authenticity, inner reflection, unfolding.

**Women Theologians.** Dr Jenny Close spoke on Synodality to an enthusiastic crowd at Kedron Parish in Brisbane on Sunday, 25 February. This event was organised by Racy Espino and Vicki Scanlan from Heads to Hearts and the Grail. This presentation is on the Grail website, [www.grailaustralia.org.au](http://www.grailaustralia.org.au) and was the first of our Women Theologians series. Janet Galos continues to share her insights into eco-spirituality and eco-theology with us. And we propose to ask Anne Pattel-Gray to speak on Aboriginal Spirituality. After all, Teilhard de Chardin did say we are spiritual beings having a human experience – which Mary Nelson so kindly reminded me in a lovely, illustrated card she and her husband, Darryl, created.

**Visit to Jan O'Donoghue.** Helen Jeffcoat and Ann Aboud visited Jan who was delighted to see them. She seemed happy and her health much improved. She has regular visits from a physiotherapist and has challenges she is determined to achieve. She spoke proudly of her family and was keeping up with her Grail reading, *I belong where I'm needed*, by Elizabeth Reid.

**Palestine Film Festival.** Ann attended this Festival and saw 'ALAM' and was lucky to get a seat to the 'Gaza Surf Club' which was sold out. She got a seat after reminding the organisers that a group to which she belonged had put on the first Palestinian Film Festival at the Schonell Theatre at the University of Queensland years ago.

**ILT Visit.** As noted in the Melbourne new our Grail's International Leadership Team (ILT), Lucy Kimaro, (Africa) Dilma Alves, (Brazil) and Lucy Jones, USA will visit the Grail in Australia from 8-21 December 2024. Planning for the visit has already begun with our National Team and the ILT meeting on Zoom recently. The ILT want to meet as many Grail members and friends as possible. Lucy Jones expressed a wish to see the reef and we are exploring options. The Grail women in Brisbane hope to organise a multi-faith meet and greet in the Francis Rush Centre and other events, to take place in between our work on Grail matters. Anyone know someone with a yacht!!!

**World Day of Prayer.** Win Manning from Mackay and Ann participated in the World Day of Prayer in St Lucia Uniting Church on 1 March. The focus for 2024 was Palestine. The order of service featured a lovely art work by Halima Aziz (b 1999) of three Palestinian women praying together in a peaceful place in nature, the olive tree a sign of everlasting life. The women wear the traditional Palestinian tareez embroidered dress and white scarf.

The golden roots show that Palestinians will always exist and work for their rights and freedom. The poppy flowers remind them of loved ones who have died for their country and the key around their neck represents the hope of return to Palestine. The booklet gave a brief history of Palestine and the worship service included three stories from Palestine: from Eleanor and Sara, Palestinian Christians and from Lina, a niece of Shireen Abu Akleh, a famous Al Jazeera journalist who was shot by a sniper almost before our very eyes as we watched the TV news. The service ended with Words of Commitment: 'May we bear with one another in love until God's justice and peace reign throughout the whole world.'

*Ann Aboud*

## Sydney News

Among the visitors we've had so far this year was Carol Webb and her friend, Suzanne, both from Illinois who visited Sydney in March a few days. We enjoyed their company as they were in and out exploring Sydney. Lectio Divina continues on Monday afternoons and Wednesday evenings on Zoom.

We have given over our news space this month to an Obituary for our dear Grail member and friend, Mary Roberston, who died on March 18, and to a reflection by Diana Baird, a Grail friend and member of Reflection Mornings Group, on some aspects of the book, *Teilhard de Chardin and the Gospels: The Message of Jesus for an Evolutionary World*, by Louis Savary. Later in the year we hope to celebrate the life and work of the Grail in the Sydney Centre, 'Avila', since we moved to North Sydney in 1954, 70 years ago!!

*Ruth Crowe*

## Vale Mary Robertson



Mary Robertson, our dear Australian Grail member, sister and friend died on 18 March. Mary was mother of five children and grandmother of nine grandchildren, teacher, Crossword supremo and much, much more. She battled a very bad infection which developed in her bones over the last months. She suffered a lot. 'A stoic', one of her sons commented! Some Grail women may have met Mary when she represented Australia at the 1992 IGA.

Mary met the Grail through the School Girls' camps run by the Grail in Sydney in the 1950s at the beautiful Grail centre in Springwood in the Blue Mountains area. A few of us who met the Grail at that time became Grail members and have been friends ever since. Mary was always a fun companion as we worked

together in Grail projects over many years.

Her Grail spirit was strong. She served as the Grail in Australia's National Treasurer for a long period. In addition, she was Principal of St. Raphael's Women's College (A Grail commitment begun in 1960 at James Cook University in North Queensland) for 7 years, 1993-1999. Her husband and her youngest son accompanied her over that period. It was a big sacrifice but gave Mary an opportunity to share life, wisdom and her breadth of vision with younger women.

Mary was a feisty feminist. She attended the landmark *Beijing Women's Forum* held in China in September 1995. She joined an active women's group while in Townsville and on her return to Sydney, she became involved in the movement against the trafficking of women in Australia. At the time trafficking of women was just being exposed. Mary representing the Grail, joined forces with other groups to expose the practice and to call for the prosecution of the people involved, mostly men from Asia. She was also part of a team of Grail women who went to Papua New Guinea (PNG) on a regular basis over several years, to support the Grail women there in their projects, particularly those connected with issues and concerns around domestic violence against women. She was loved for her sense of humour and the solidarity she showed with her Grail sisters in PNG.

She loved her family and friends unconditionally. At the Mass celebrating Mary's Life, prepared by her children and grandchildren, the first reading was from Ecclesiastes 44:10-15: *'Here is a generous woman whose good works have not been forgotten. In her descendants, there remains a rich inheritance born of her; Her descendants stand by her covenants, and thanks to her, so do her children's children. Her offspring will last forever, her glory will not fade. Her body will be buried in peace and her name will live on for all generations.'*

We miss her greatly, but we know she now lives in the deep peace of God and shares a place in the communion of saints with her family and Grail ancestors! After her death, her daughter, Colleen, wrote to the Grail women in Australia saying, 'it's great to think of the energy and grace that Mary put out into the world'. Amen to that!

**Ruth Crowe** for the Grail in Australia



## The Grail Award

### Meet Elizabeth Habjan

'In late 2023 Elizabeth Habjan was presented with the Grail Award for her incredible contributions to the Saints Catholic College at James Cook University in Townsville as well as to the local community in Townsville, all her volunteer work along with her tutoring and cultural contributions'. So writes Jordan Holland, Operation Manager of Saints Catholic College, at James Cook University. He continues:

'Elizabeth Joined Saints College in 2022 and quickly became one of our standout young women, successfully applying for the Role of Resident Assistant (RA) in 2023. During her time at Saints Elizabeth has moved from strength to strength, offering tutoring for both 1<sup>st</sup> year Bachelor of Bio Medical Science residents at Saints and externally for local high school students. Elizabeth has undertaken several extra-curricular responsibilities including hosting



and welcoming our Chinese cohort from South Western University China, as she is fluent in Mandarin and through her work with these students has become an integral part of our Chinese community at Saints.

Elizabeth has excelled during her time at Saints becoming a mentor and Residential Assistant in her 2<sup>nd</sup> year, while also continuing to provide external tutoring and assistance for local high school students in need of support. Elizabeth was also a pillar of support for the RA team around her despite being new to the role. Her forthright personality and integrity made her an invaluable member of the team, seeing her standing up to inappropriate behaviours and acts to ensure that the college felt like a home to all of its residents. Elizabeth has continually proven her strength of character overcoming challenges both personal and professional during the academic year, making the decision for whom the Grail award would go to an easy choice in 2023.

**'Well done' to Elizabeth**, it is certainly a well-earned accolade for your commitment to living the values of not only Saints Catholic College, but the Grail Women's Movement as well.'

Jordan also congratulated the Grail on our 60 years of association with the Catholic Colleges at James Cook University, especially, St. Raphael's Women's College. Grail women staffed St. Raphael's from 1964-1999. In the years that have followed, the Grail Award has been awarded annually to a young woman who lives in Saints College, in recognition of the amazing achievements of a young woman making an impact in the world, He concluded, 'I would be very interested in potentially hosting a formal dinner at Saints to celebrate this 60 years of association, if this might be considered'. It is being considered for later in 2024!

## The Palm Cross



The air conditioning service people are coming today so I am clearing away clutter so that they can more easily get to the units. I came across a box of mementoes I had put aside after my father's death and funeral in 2016. Inside, amongst the sympathy cards was a small palm cross.

My father had lived a long and happy life, dying at aged 92 after only a short illness, living in his own home until his final three weeks in the Wesley Hospital. One could hardly feel that he had been taken too soon or suffered years of illness and indignity. Yet his death had taken me by surprise. We, my husband Brian and our four children, live only a five minute walk from my parents home. My mother had died suddenly 7 years earlier. Though depressed and saddened by this loss after 50 years of marriage dad had remained active and very social. Our children were his only grandchildren, and he spent a lot of time with them. He picked our twin sons up from their distant school – Keith and Duncan saying that granddad was great, as he never asked what they had done that day or if they had any homework. He took our daughters on outings, giving them \$20 outside an op shop then giving them free rein, or to the beach to collect shells.

He had been diagnosed with cancer at the start of the year but had responded well to treatment. Then ... one day in September he seemed very unsteady and confused so my brother and I took him to the Wesley Hospital and he was quickly admitted. Strangely, I didn't seem to notice that they weren't exactly "treating" him until the palliative care doctor took me aside. He was being moved to the quiet ward and from that day till his death three weeks later dad never regained consciousness. We visited daily, just sitting quietly beside his bed. It was obvious that his life was drawing slowly to a close.

I was working at a catholic girls school and that day supervising a study class of Year 12 students. This particular class contained a detention group of students who had played up, not done their homework, had uniform violations and the like. There was one girl in it, Faith, who was a frequent offender but such a nice girl. Crimes like wearing the wrong socks were hardly a deal breaker in life. I didn't really know Faith's background, but I suspected it was fairly bleak. If it was a Friday she would often ask me wistfully "What are you doing on the weekend Miss?" Students were not supposed to ask personal questions of staff and if asked you were told to discourage it. However, I always answered honestly, describing easy family activities. Going op shopping with my daughters on Saturday, then dinner out and a movie with husband Saturday night. Sunday was mass, where we were on the morning tea roster then home for a bit of sewing and then the big roast dinner for all the family on Sunday night. Faith was always interested. What shops, what movie Miss she would ask.

That week when she asked, I broke with the rule and said something more personal, that that weekend we would be all visiting my father in the Wesley as he was very ill. On the following Monday Faith bounced into class and asked "How is your father Miss?" Dad had died the night before and this would be the first time I told anyone outside immediate family. I just said, "He died last night Faith". She was shocked, as of course there was no way she was expecting this answer. Life drawing to a close is outside teenagers usual experience. "I am very sorry to hear that Miss" was all she said. Faith returned to her seat and a short time later she asked to go to the bathroom. I said yes, even though the rule was that they go during the breaks between classes. Faith was gone a long time, I was concerned and



irritated. She would get into trouble and so would I. Then she returned and came to my desk. Out of her uniform pocket she drew out a small, polished palm cross and put it into my hand. “You hold this Miss when you think of your father”.

Now where had she got the cross from? I suspect she had wandered all round the school looking for an empty and unlocked classroom and then raided the prayer table. All home rooms had a prayer table and they were used as a small altar at the start of the day during the home room meeting and class prayers. Home Room teachers were always complaining that items were being nicked from their tables. There was a lot of one upmanship in prayer table decorations, and most were heaped with crosses, icons, holy cards and the like. Or perhaps Faith had wandered the school till she sighted the Dean of Mission or Head of Religion teachers and asked them for some small thing she might give me.

I have never forgotten the gesture or the gift. Dad’s funeral was the next week, and this was in the school holidays. Faith was in the church amongst family and friends of dad.

***Helen Jeffcoat (Brisbane Grail)***



## **“Teilhard de Chardin on the Gospels – The Message of Jesus for an Evolutionary World” by Louis Savary.**

For just over a year a group of Grail friends in Crows Nest have been working with this book. Ruth Crowe has now asked me to write a reflection on Teilhard’s “ideas and insights and some elements of the book that I think people might find surprising or are simply unaware of”. In attending to this task, I can only express my own thoughts and sincerely hope I don’t give offence in the process.

Evolution was at the heart of everything for Teilhard and the absolute core of Christianity. He saw God as a God of evolution - that creation was a process, not an event. Teilhard didn’t see a mechanistic world with no meaning or purpose, he saw a grand work in progress that was full of meaning and purpose. Clearly this is why he could see a future worth having - as one admirer, Mario Cumo, commented “he made negativism a sin - he taught us how the whole universe – even pain and imperfection is sacred”.

So, I can only conclude that Teilhard’s “ideas and insights” stemmed from his very clear and radical perception of God’s love and intelligence and, from being conscious that evolution is not confined to biology - that it applies to *every* aspect of life. Our knowledge, understanding, wisdom, beliefs, abstract concepts and skills, are continuously evolving – this is God’s method of co-creation. And presumably, this is what led to his profound insight that “By virtue of the Creation, and still more, of the incarnation nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see” (Le Milieu Divin p 61).

Speaking from experience then, my guess is that (for quite a lot of people at least) the “surprises” will come when they find many of their own instincts and insights being confirmed in this book. And, that the things they were “unaware of” may well start shedding light on some of the questions that have troubled them for most of their lives.

As with any book, bits that hit a spot for some may not do so for others. So, in the Foreword, Richard Rohr illustrates why it's not a book to read like a novel or a text book, but one to reflect on and pray with. In other words, read with an open mind and heart in the manner of *lectio divina*. This is a meditative way of reading in which we let go of our own agendas and open ourselves to what God is trying to say *directly* to us – like a personal revelation appropriate for that particular individual's calling. This concept is consistent with the Catechism of the Catholic Church 1:51.

So, I thought the chapters on the four Gospels, and their evolutionary implications, were insightful - especially in terms of discernment for personal and/or collective mission. However, I found the first three and the last three chapters of the book – “Hermeneutics”, “Evolution”, “Metanoia” and the “Evolution of Human Consciousness” –much more enlightening and encouraging.

These chapters give us the ability to get a grasp of our genetic and cultural heritage that has hard wired our way of thinking, believing and behaving. This then gives us a better understanding of ourselves and each other and in turn, enables us to see our past, present and future in a much more positive light. *Understanding* being the key word because it opens us up to whole new ways of seeing and being. Then we can really get to the roots of our ills and start dealing with them more effectively. As Pope Francis said “it provokes a *metanoia* that can foster ethical and theological reflection, even before inspiring suitable pastoral attitudes and responsible and carefully planned political policies”.

On page 4 he draws attention to the perils of ‘compartmentalizing religion’ and “treating science and religion as two unrelated worlds that do not intersect”.

Theodosius Dobzhansky was a renowned evolutionary biologist and theologian who was greatly influenced by the writings of Teilhard. In 1973 he wrote an essay entitled “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in The light of Evolution”. It seems to me much the same needs to be said about religion, atheism, cultural beliefs and philosophy. How can we expect to get *satisfactory* answers to the big questions and - more to the point - find *feasible* and *sustainable* solutions to our ills if we don't consider these areas in the light of evolution.

Teilhard saw a direction to evolution, “an undeniable trend towards increasing complexity, interconnection and rising in consciousness”. Ongoing discoveries in quantum science and neuroscience is now proving him right and this is the crux of why I think this is such a valuable book. In a time of crises and polarization, such as we've never experienced before, it couldn't be more helpful for opening our eyes to what we're missing. And in this respect, it also highlights the sound wisdom of Ignatian Spirituality - the spirituality in which Teilhard was steeped.

The appendix at the end “Teilhard on Evangelization” is thought provoking and challenges us all in terms of a synodal church – “where the whole community is called to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern, and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which corresponds as closely as possible to God's will” (ICT, Syn 67-68). Ignatius's rules for discernment would be invaluable here.

So, to stress, this book doesn't necessarily give specific answers to the big questions so much as it opens our minds to new ways of seeing and being. It resonates with Isaiah 43:18-19 *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it*

*springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (NIV) and also, Teilhard’s well considered thought that “we are not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey”.*

Karl Rahner SJ predicted that “the devout Christian of the future, will either be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or will cease to be anything at all” and I see no reason why the same can’t apply to those of all faiths and none. For me it conjures up an image of a global metanoia.

For anyone who doesn’t have the book and would like a preview, the Foreword, plus the Preface and the first three chapters can be read online in the Amazon promotion.

***Diana Baird***



## **WATAC International Women’s Day Special Forum Webinar**

**Wednesday 6 March 2024**

On International women’s Day 2024, WATAC and The Grail in Australia produced a special forum to celebrate the 3rd birthday of Australian Women Preach – the weekly podcast that ‘models the church we want to be by raising women’s voices in preaching the gospel.’ The forum celebrated the 157 podcasts that span the 3 cycles of the Catholic lectionary.



WATAC member and host Rachel McLean welcomed the panel members made up of AWP committee members. Most of the founding committee were present: Patricia Gemmell, Tracy McEwan, Angela Marquis, Elizabeth Lee and Louise Maher. Of the new committee members Angela McCarthy, Jenny Close and Racy Espino were on screen. Colleen Rowe and Bec Beisler were in the audience while Wendy Goonan was unable to be present on the night. Andrea Dean and Sue Wittenoom from WATAC also appeared on screen.

Host Rachel McLean asked Patricia Gemmell and Tracy McEwan about the history of AWP. Patricia described how, in her engagement in the listening and dialogue discussion prior to

the Plenary Council, she often heard a yearning from church folk for good preaching. Soon after, she had a fateful conversation with Tracy McEwan and the rest is history.

Tracy said that her dream was for something that would move past complaining about the problems with church and move towards making change happen. Her aim was to produce something perhaps a little subversive, helping unite women in the church and maybe giving a thumbs up: ‘catch up guys, this is what we’re doing – join us!’ Tracy likened AWP to the garden that’s out the back of the church – something that was not burning down the church but creating something wonderful—a collection for future generations.

From an inexperienced group—few of whom had actually listened to a podcast—the learning curve was incredibly steep. To begin with, the committee members were working things out week by week, until some standard processes emerged over time. Angela Marquis and Angela McCarthy described some of the work that goes into producing the podcast each week.

Louise Maher, who records each session, said that she was reluctant at first—upon invitation from Tracy—to get involved with a religious enterprise. Now, however, Louise finds that she gets to meet a rich diversity of women each week and is amazed at the number and diversity of women who preach. Jenny Close described her role using her combined training in art and theology to make the social media images. Since she does not engage with social media herself, the images are passed on to Racy Espino and Wendy Goonan who load them into Facebook and X each week. Elizabeth Lee described how, despite having a background in theology and ministry, she found her voice silenced by the Catholic Church, but AWP and her current worshiping community allowed her to speak. Elizabeth described the process of recording her podcast ‘very enabling and empowering.’

Racy Espino described how she was prompted to think about women’s role in church when her daughter asked why there were only male priests. That began a journey of discovery for Racy and when she got the invitation from AWP to preach, she thought ‘this is my chance to show my daughter that . . . we can make a difference.’ She found that preaching with AWP was an exciting and humbling experience. In order to make the homily meaningful, Racy had to spend a lot of time researching, reflecting, discerning and asking for contributions from others. It was her first time recording a podcast, so it involved much practice. Racy subsequently shared the podcast with folks far and wide, including her family and friends in the Philippines for whom the podcast was particularly inspirational.

Patricia Gemmell described her personal highlight of being part of AWP over the years –‘the bonds of friendship that we have developed are very, very special . . . and it’s a great joy to be part of the team.’ The team, who meet each week on Zoom, is a diverse group from different parts of Australia: Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales, the ACT and Queensland.

Sue Wittenoom noted that AWP is ‘a child of Zoom’ and ‘a creation of its time’ - with the advantage of being able to draw together people from anywhere in Australia as committee members, as preachers and as listeners each week. To conclude the webinar, Bec Beisler made a short video celebrating AWP’s 3rd anniversary. Bec used the theme song from the podcast, which was composed and performed by Danielle Anne Lynch.

*Dr Jenny Close*