



Missionary Sisters of Service

A MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

NEWSLETTER

Remembering Fr John Corcoran Wallis

Volume 59 | No 2 | August 2026

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Fr John's death on 3 August. To honour the occasion, a special Mass was celebrated on Sunday 2 August, led by Bishop Mark Freeman (Diocese of Ballarat), formerly a priest of the Archdiocese of Hobart and well known to Fr John. Friends and family gathered from near and far at St Thomas the Apostle Church and school hall in Blackburn to share stories of Fr John and reflect on his enduring legacy. See overleaf for photos.



Photos from top left: Julia Walsh, MSS Archivist; Catherine Carr (MSS Coordinator), Sr Veronica Hoey SGS (MSS Canonical Delegate) and Stancea Vichie MSS; Bernadette Madden MSS and Corrie van den Bosch MSS. Left: Glenn d'Souza (MSS Business Manager) and Bernadette Wallis MSS.

On MSS Foundation Day, 8 July, the Melbourne Missionary Sisters of Service and staff gathered to celebrate with a special presentation from the MSS Archives. Julia Walsh, who works alongside Bernadette Wallis mss, shared some of the fascinating diaries, photographs and archival treasures, reflecting on how working with these materials has deepened her understanding of both the history of the congregation and her own Catholic faith.

A particular highlight was listening to a recording of our Founder, Fr John Wallis, speaking on MSS Foundation Day in 1987 as he recounted the story of the congregation's beginnings. Although the audio quality reflected its age, his distinctive voice, warmth and characteristic humour shone through, bringing back many memories for the Sisters present and offering everyone a moving connection to our founding story. **More info and photos: www.missionarysisters.org.au/news**

It is exciting to be able to announce the successful applicant for the **MSS Teresa Morse scholarship**, Katherine Owen. Katherine has a background in accountancy, pastoral work in parishes, and these days works for the Australian Catholic Bishops research wing, the National Centre for Pastoral Research, which has an office above the MSS at the University of Divinity in Box Hill.

With MSS funds as well as a scholarship through the University of Divinity, Katherine began a Doctorate in July. Her research will be on the role of women and leadership in the New Testament. Katherine and her husband have four grownup children. She is very excited about the study years ahead, something she had thought would never be possible if funds had not been available. She has expressed deep gratitude to MSS for this great opportunity.



Vale John Erbs (1940 - 2026)

We give thanks for the life of John Erbs who died in Toowoomba on 25 June 2026. John and Therese have been long-time friends of the MSS and until more recent years, John and Therese were part of the Toowoomba Highways and Byways group, who, along with some of the Toowoomba sisters, held events featuring significant speakers who came to Toowoomba. These events attracted many local and other people on a wide range of topics. Our prayer and thoughts are with Therese and all the family at this time.

The Australian Religious Archive in conjunction with the University of Divinity hopes to come into operation in the near future with the increasing need for its development for various religious orders and faith groups in the future. However, the search for a suitable building which is big enough is still required for a long term solution which is the nature of Archives. Suggestions from people would be most appreciated. Contact Bernadette Wallis MSS: btwallis@missionarysisters.org.au



As always, we'd love to remind you to please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support the Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways Small Grants Program. Simply:

1. Visit the Mary MacKillop Today donation page. Scan QR code or go to: www.marymackilloptoday.org.au/donate
2. Select the amount and fill in your details
3. In the 'Your message' box, write: 'Please direct my donation to the Highways and Byways Small Grants Program'



Your generosity helps continue the MSS legacy of connection and service in communities across Australia.

Celebrating the life and legacy of Fr John: 25 Years On



Top photo from left: Fr Brian Nichols, Fr Chris McPhee, Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR, David Alcock, Gabrielle McMullen, Bernadette Wallis MSS, Bernadette Madden MSS, Bishop Mark Freeman (front centre), Sauro Antonello, Corrie van den Bosch MSS, Stancea Vichie MSS, Veronica Hoey SGS, Kath Clune MSS, Marcia McMahon MSS and Pat Brain MSS. **Second Row:** Fran Horn, Margaret and Dennis Cooper; Patricia ni Ivor and Bernadette Madden MSS; Steve and Zoë Anderson. **Bottom row:** Bernard Marmion, Denis Fitzgerald, Peter Hudson; Fr John's nieces and nephew from left: Loretta Wallis, Chris Wallis, Anne Fulton, Kathleen Corcoran, Fran Grindlay, Jane Fulton, Mary May, Bernadette Wallis MSS. Photos courtesy Fiona Basile. Read more and see the full gallery at www.missionarysisters.org.au/news

Where are our women now and what are they doing?

Our Sisters continue to embrace new chapters of life with resilience, faith and gratitude. In Melbourne, we have Betty McManus, June Dunford, Stancea Vichie, Bernadette Wallis, Pat Kelly, Pat Brain, Marcia McMahon, Julianne Dunne, Corrie van den Bosch, Kath Clune and Bernadette Madden. In Toowoomba, Queensland, you'll find Pat Quinn, Margaret Windsham, Cecilia Bailey, Mary Cleary and Nancy Doyle, and Marie Murphy in Mackay. Cheryle Thomson remains in Port Pirie, South Australia, while in Hobart Tasmania, we have Lorraine Groves and Frances McShane. Through life's changes, our Sisters continue to support one another with friendship, faith and hope, embracing each day with the spirit that has long been at the heart of MSS.



June Dunford MSS, 89, and Betty McManus MSS, 95, both live at Regis Residential Care in Blackburn. The centre caters for Signing Deaf people and so, Auslan classes were offered for anybody at the facility. A room full of people attend including Betty and June. 'I just want to be able to acknowledge Deaf people here in their language,' says Betty. June says, 'I want to be able to connect with Deaf people here.' They both also attend the liturgy service provided by the John Pierce Centre for Deaf ministry once a month.



MSS Coordinator Catherine Carr with Marie Murphy MSS.



Lorraine Groves MSS and Frances McShane MSS.



Marcia McMahon MSS (right) with Wafa, who is from the Bahá'í faith and Persian culture. After meeting in a local park, they have become good friends and now gather regularly for prayer, faith sharing and companionship.



Kath Clune (left) tends to an impressive indoor garden at her home. She currently has 60 pot plants in the house! While Bernadette Madden (right, at the ironing table) has been busy with a group of creative and talented women sewing bags to support community members in need.

