

# *RNDM Renewal- A pilgrimage to our Roots 25 April to 20 June 2018*

## *3<sup>rd</sup> Newsletter*

Dear Sisters

Loving greetings from Rome where we have just concluded our Renewal program, 2018 after an enriching time of nearly 8 weeks. In our last newsletter, we shared with you about our journey up until the closing liturgy in St Rambert. Much has happened since then and in the last two weeks, we continued our pilgrimage in London, Deal, Sturry and Rome. This has been a good experience and we are greatly enriched by the entire experience. The hospitality of the sisters in these communities has been wonderful.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, Sister Patricia Boyd, Province Leader, accompanied us to Lyon airport to farewell us and to follow through her promise (in sports terms) .... to “kick us from the Province”. We are very grateful for the wonderful hospitality shown to us by the Communities of St Rambert, Lyon, Charenton and Toulon.



On our arrival at Luton airport in England, we were met by Sisters Catherine Corrigan and Brigid Quinn with a coach to transport us to the Wealdstone community where we were welcomed once again by generous RNDM hospitality. After the meal Sister Rose Mary Harbinson, with the aid of a power point, briefed us on our Pilgrimage “Tracing the Footsteps of Euphrasie” during her years in London.



Our first day in London started with a visit to the Sacred Heart Language College where we were welcomed by the Student Leadership team and the Head Teacher, Miss Geraldine Higgins. A sharing of stories from both groups expressed a desire from the students to extend their zeal for fundraising to cover RNDM Missions. During the visit to the Chapel, we were entertained by a very beautiful rendition of “Ave Maria” by one of the girls. Geraldine was excited to meet once again, two members of our group, Frances Wilson and Alphonsa Varghese, who had attended with her the 2013 Education Symposium in Perth. Geraldine expressed how privileged she felt when asked to be a witness as part of the process for Euphrasie’s beatification. Her RNDM spirit is very strong and zealous for mission.

With Sister Maria Vui as our tour guide, we travelled by the underground train and an hour’s walk with hot, tired feet to 109 Lichfield St and Queen St to view Euphrasie’s homes during her time as a Sister of Compassion. This led us to Mary Ward’s Place for a much longed-for lunch. The next highlight was Buckingham Palace but we were unfortunate as the Queen was not available to receive us! Instead, we took in the beautiful grounds and area through photos. Little did we know that the next day, Saturday, was to be the celebration of the Queen’s Birthday honours “Trooping of the Colour” which



involved a grand parade of horses, coaches, red-coated troops and royalty making its way down the Mall. We were there on the wrong day!



To conclude the day, we enjoyed the company of the Wealdstone Sisters in a social atmosphere of fun, games and sharing of stories which were animated by the essence of “We are One, We are Love.” We were pleased to see Mary Toner from the New Southgate community who joined us for the evening.

The next morning we were treated to a right royal Irish breakfast to send us on our way to Deal and Sturry with grateful thanks in our hearts for the kindness and hospitality of the Sisters. Their preparation and care of us

during our visit to Wealdstone was extraordinary.

The Sisters at Deal welcomed us with open arms as the RNDM hospitality continued with greetings and a hearty meal. We checked out the gardens and buildings before Prayer and the evening meal. Twelve of us went to Sturry for accommodation. More excited greetings met us on arrival. The following morning, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>, all of us met with Yvonne Pepper who gave us a briefing on the Heritage House and Euphrasie’s final resting place. The long-awaited moment of entering St Anne’s Chapel to pray before Euphrasie’s tomb arrived. An emotional time for reflective prayer was followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Malachy Steensen, Passionist. His opening words of the Homily were appropriate for the occasion: “You come here as the family of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. You come to St Anne’s where rests the mortal remains of your foundress, Euphrasie, whose vision you share of reaching out to the most deprived members of human society.”



We were privileged in the afternoon to be shown the archives by Celestine who explained the showcase items and personal belongings of Euphrasie. Nicola Waddington, archivist, had prepared items from the early days of each province represented in the Renewal group. The most auspicious moment was when Nicola showed us Euphrasie’s carefully preserved tunic inviting us to place our emblems and rings on the cloth.

On Monday, Kathleen McGuire was our tour guide leading us through the history of Euphrasie’s time in Deal. First we visited St Mary’s primary school where the Sisters still stay in touch to keep the RNDM Charism alive. This spirit is strongly depicted in beautiful mosaics on the school wall featuring the Sisters’ work in education through the years. At the cemetery we prayed for our pioneer Sisters and Catherine Boys (founder of the orphanage) then followed the footsteps of Euphrasie to 8 Middle St and the Historical Queen Anne House where, from 1870, the Sisters assisted Miss Boys with her orphanage. St Ethelburga’s school and convent is now replaced by a car park and supermarket. However, the Chapel windows have been



included in the outer wall. The evening concluded with a cultural gathering with the community. This was a lively, hilarious and joyful time, perhaps because of the Irish coffee that was served beforehand!



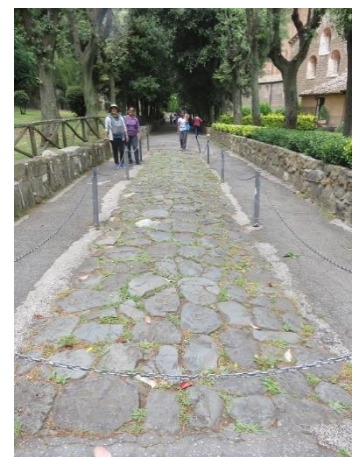
Tuesday was our last day in Sturry with reflective Prayer in the Chapel and visiting the elderly Sisters in St Anne's House. Sr Kathleen McMenimin at 107 years of age was a favourite! The Sisters joined in the singing of the Gloria Patri with great gusto! Later in the day at the final Reflective prayer, each Sister of the Renewal group placed a candle and intentions card on Euphrasie's tomb. This was a very emotional and respectful time of recommitment.

To conclude the day we enjoyed a social evening with the Deal community forming a Friendship Ring. The next day, the community waved us goodbye with a display of flags honouring the countries which we represented. We thank Margo Murphy and her merry band of Sisters in the UK & Ireland communities for their most gracious, kind and generous hospitality. We were on our way to Rome!

Jo, Smitha, Joyce, Phan Yen, Crescencia and Carmel met us with transport for 628 Via di Bravetta where excited voices heralded our arrival. We were reunited with three of the group who had not received visas for England. Also, Josephine had returned to Kenya from Deal and Theresa had returned to Peru from St Rambert. Our group was now down to 19 members. The Generalate community was to be a full house with seven Sisters at a nearby Pensione. How happy we were to meet the Sisters in the Rome community and see the Eternal City.

Our first day in Rome began with our opening Prayer in the Chapel with reflective readings from St John Paul 11 and Euphrasie. The Intercessory Prayers were prayed by the Sisters in the different languages present.

We then began our journey... "Following the Footsteps of St Paul". Beginning with La Scala Coeli, the shrine dedicated to the Beheading of St Paul. After spending some reflective time in the Abbey Church of the Trappists, we made a diversion over the road to the Shrine of the Virgin of Revelation who describes herself as "Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and Temple of the Holy Spirit. One who is of the Divine Trinity." To pray at this shrine was an experience filled with prayerful wonder.



Our next stop was at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls where we were taken aback at the massive size of the structure. We tried to count the number of portraits of each Pope since St Peter displayed high on the walls but we didn't get very far, believing there are 266. This is the sacred place where the body of St Paul is buried in a marble tombstone bearing the inscription: APOSTLE PAUL, MARTYR.

Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> was the day everyone had been waiting for, a visit to St Peter's Basilica, a dream now come true. The magnificence of the structure and the splendour of

the interior is breathtakingly so beautiful. No wonder it took 120 years to complete! We thought we were entering into a new world! We arrived by 8am to celebrate Mass in the Crypt at the Polish Chapel of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Australian Fr Tony Corcoran SM was the celebrant and very pleased to be with the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions whom he knows very well. This was followed by a climb to the dome which those of us with faint hearts did not attempt the climb! The youngest and strongest made it halfway by lift then climbed the rest of the 551 steps to view the Vatican gardens and a 360 degree view of the city of Rome and Vatican gardens. Even though there are thousands of people milling around the Basilica each day, there are many places of quiet for reflective prayer and we took advantage of this unique experience. We were filled with joy at having had the opportunity to see this Church where, supported now by scientific research as well as by the oral tradition, St Peter is actually buried. This day was a very memorial part of our Pilgrimage.

Shopping was the order of the day for Saturday so by the afternoon everyone was exhausted but excited by their purchases because the next day, Sunday, was to be another day that we had been excitedly waiting for. After Mass in the Church of the Holy Spirit near the Vatican, we made our way through the crowds to the spot where we could have a clear view of Our Holy Father, Pope Francis. In the crowd we were clearly visible as a group by wearing blue scarves printed with the RNDM emblem and Our Lady of the Missions. On the dot of 12 noon Pope Francis appeared at the window for his address to the people and prayed the Angelus. It is amazing that such a huge crowd of people were so fervent and quiet during the prayer but soon erupted into cheers of “Vive la Papa!” ... a truly moving, long-awaited experience for us all. We were welcomed home to a delicious BBQ lunch prepared by the community, accompanied by much joviality and excitement; another example of RNDM hospitality and “We are One We are Love.” A DVD depicting the history of Rome to the present day provided the evening’s entertainment.



Monday 18<sup>th</sup> was the day when we followed the footsteps of Euphrasie through the streets of Rome. Starting at the Chiesa Nuovo where St Phillip Neri is buried, we moved on to the Church of the Jesuits, The Gesu, where we attended Mass in the Chapel. The magnificence of the building is so overwhelming with each side chapel beautifully adorned. These are two Churches where Euphrasie



would have attended Mass during any of her eight visits to Rome when she came to have the Congregation and Constitutions approved as well as many other matters to attend to. Euphrasie stayed with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition in No 18 Piazza Margana. The actual buildings in the area that Euphrasie saw and visited are still there so we were able to visualise her walking these same streets. We climbed the 125 steps to the Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli where Euphrasie also attended Mass and would have seen the miraculous statue of the Bambino

(Holy Infant) made of olive wood from the Garden of Gethsemane. We enjoyed lunch on the lookout

to the Roman Forum, a place that Euphrasie would have passed on her way to the Mamertine Prison of Saints Peter and Paul, and the church of St Martina where she prayed before the tomb of St Martina. The old Roman road leading away from this place is worn over many centuries, including the footsteps of Euphrasie. We walked reflectively wondering how she managed to walk so many miles while in Rome. There were no buses, as we have today, to deliver her to various destinations!

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup>, our last day in Rome! We travelled to the Catacombs of Priscilla, the cemetery of Martyrs and Popes, on the Via Salaria, a hot but very satisfying experience. We were touched by the ancient frescos still preserved on the walls.



That evening we had our beautifully prepared concluding prayer in the Chapel during which we placed our particular “foot print” around the picture of Euphrasie. Each one had written a word or phrase summing up the whole experience of the renewal. These we shared before the concluding blessing and sigh of peace.

A joyful social evening marked the end of our time together. Our creative talents were in full display and what tiredness we may have experienced, was dissipated by the laughter and joviality of the evening. There was still time left for the final packing prior to departures.



After eight weeks, so ends our Pilgrimage, following the Footprints of Euphrasie. We thank the Congregational Leadership Team, our Province Leaders and Communities and the Communities with whom we have stayed over this time. We especially thank Lucy, who has walked every step of the way, encouraging, inspiring, leading, keeping us safe and praying with us on the journey.

We thank Euphrasie who has guided us on this “Pilgrimage to our Roots”. We are now continuing her dream of missionary zeal, as she did, through witnessing to the Gospel. While visiting the RNDM communities along the way, we can see how the fire of missionary zeal lived out by Euphrasie and her pioneer Sisters is being lived out today. As with our first courageous women, faithful to God, we are encouraged to continue to live in this fire of zeal, making known the Reign of God in our world today.

Our gratitude to you sisters for your support to us through prayers and messages at different times during the last eight weeks. To those of you who took on extra responsibilities to free us in our different ministries, we thank you. We prayed for you at different times of our pilgrimage and a special remembrance for each of you at the tomb of Euphrasie.

We wish you many blessings in all that you do.

*Your loving sisters,*

**RNDM Renewal 2018**