From the Principal

Dear Sionians

This year marks the College’s 85th Anniversary and as the years go by our Sionian College community continues to get stronger.

Our College theme for 2013 is “Give thanks with a grateful heart”. The founder of Our Lady of Sion, Fr Theodore Ratisbonne, said that gratitude should be a distinctive mark of Sion. As past students of Our Lady of Sion, I am sure you would recognize this importance.

Gratitude can be a very powerful expression and the expression of gratitude has been a hallmark of most religions. The wisdom behind gratitude is quite simple – acknowledging all the good we have in our lives in this moment intrinsically unlocks a treasure chest of abundance, filled with our hopes and dreams.

Theologically, gratitude, the affirmation of a bond between giver and receiver, is central to the human-divine relationship. Gratitude is a universal religious response evident in the offerings described in ancient Scriptures to contemporary praise and worship. The idea that one should reflect upon the abundance of God's gifts and express that in thanksgiving and praise is a theme that permeates texts, prayers and teachings of Biblical faith. In both Christian and Jewish worldviews, gratitude is that appropriate response to the extraordinary kindness of God whose ever-loving nature wants only the very best for us all. Because of this centrality, gratitude is the heart of the Gospel.

As Christians, we should be always alert to God's grace in our life and express our gratitude for the abundant gifts that God has bestowed upon us. Gratitude is at the heart of our faith.

I see our theme this year presenting us with a specific focus of what is distinctively part of Our Lady of Sion and our College Mission. This theme builds upon the themes of the last two years where we reached out to the other and recognized our gifts of courage, grace and wisdom. If I give thanks for what I have, then I see the extraordinary potential I have to make the world a better place.

I am enormously grateful to our Past Students’ Association Committee for the commitment, dedication and passion they have for the College. They are exceptional women who recognize the gift they received through a Sionian education and are willing to give back to a community that gave them so much.

May you continue to enjoy the stories in this Sionian newsletter and I hope to see many of you at reunions, past student events or even on the Committee.

With every blessing

Karen Jebb
Principal

President’s Report

It is with much excitement that I write this report as the newly-elected President of the Sion Past Students’ Association.

Elske Tecklenburg has been our president for the past two years and on behalf of the Committee I would like to wholeheartedly thank Elske for all her work as leader of our group. Thankfully for us she will remain as a Committee member.

I have been on the Committee for over five years now and it has been really lovely to reconnect with the place that had such an influence on me in my developing years. My fellow core Committee members, Elske, Maureen Eldridge (Vice-President), Danielle Grehan (Secretary) and Sisters Mary Barbuto, Stella O’Donnell and Patricia Watson have formed the backbone of the Committee. We are also thankful to Karen Jebb, Principal, Carolyn Young, Deputy Principal — Faith and Mission, and Robyn McCann, Administration Assistant for the extensive support and input they provide.

As a Committee we are aiming to grow our members, so please do attend a meeting if you have been thinking of coming back and having another look at the College. We always have a laugh and enjoy planning for upcoming events and the Sionian. Being a Committee member does not take a lot of time, but is great fun - we’d love to welcome you along!

I recently had the pleasure of meeting the winner of the 2012 Daughter of Sion Award, Year Nine student Cassandra Hamshaw.

The award is presented by the Past Students’ Association to a student from Years Seven or Eight who demonstrates leadership qualities, empathy to her fellow students and a strong commitment to social justice. Cassie gave me a tour of the school and it was fantastic to see the changes, as well as to reminisce about what I remember from my school days!

If you have time, I would really encourage you to visit the Heritage Room 1928, housed in the Learning Resource Centre (you may remember it as the Library). Sandy Nicholson, who oversees the Past Student Archive, has coordinated the project and collected the many items of memorabilia and photos in the collection. Donations of items and photos are always welcome too.

I look forward to the year ahead as President of the Committee and hope to see some of you at our next meeting (There's chocolate biscuits too!)

Emily Webb
President Past Students Association
I was introduced to the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion by the stories brought home with my two older sisters during their holidays from boarding at Sion Convent, Sale. When it came time for my secondary education at Sion I was relieved to know that I did not have to board. By this time the family had moved from the sheep and cattle farm in Leebrook to the town of Sale, and we lived just across the road from the Convent.

Up until then my life in the country had been helping my father round up sheep, sweeping the boards in the shearing shed and cycling three miles to the little state primary school of about 12 pupils. The change from my idyllic life in the wide-open countryside to a town was a major change for me and I find that I still have a strong emotional attachment to that farm life.

During my years at the Sion Convent I found the Sisters to be very welcoming, friendly and encouraging, and there was a happy spirit within the school. After I finished at the school there was quite a great deal of interaction between my family and the Sisters over the years — driving the Sisters to the Cathedral for the liturgies or responding to some of their other needs.

I don’t think I had any intention of joining them until one day one of the local priests asked me if I had thought of being a nun. Twelve months later I entered the novitiate and was professed in two years. I trained as a teacher and loved teaching the Grade 3 children and then I had another year as Year 7 class mistress and religion teacher at Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill.

Next I was sent to Rome as Secretary to the Superior General. Rome was a wonderful opportunity to be opened up to the wider world and its treasures, as well as meeting many of the Our Lady of Sion Sisters from around the world. I lived in an international Sion community in the heart of Rome, which ran the Sion Centre for Jewish Christian Relations. I think that was the beginning of my love of Judaism and Sion’s work in this field.

The two and a half years in Rome was followed by eighteen months in Jerusalem studying Judaism, Hebrew and scripture. At the end of my stay I knew very strongly that I wanted to work in Jewish-Christian relations when I came home.

The work of Jewish-Christian relations for me is a work of justice as well as a work of reconciliation. Justice is in righting the wrong of the Church’s “teaching of contempt” of the Jewish people and Judaism, and thus reconciling the relationship. In the meantime, we Christians can discover the Jewish roots of our faith, which can be a great help in deepening the understanding of our Christianity.

Reflecting on my life as a Sister of Our Lady of Sion since my first vows in 1964 brings forth within me a heartfelt gratitude, joy, peace and satisfaction for the opportunities and challenging experiences that I have been given.

To students at the College and to our past pupils, I simply say: know yourself, your talents and weaknesses and find that deeper call or vision within you. Use all this to become the person you were created by God to be.

Sr Mary Lotton nds

Daughter of Sion Award

The Past Students’ Association annually awards the Daughter of Sion prize to a student from Years 7 or 8 who displays qualities that clearly reflect Sionian values and attributes.

The selected student needs to have shown passion, energy and be a positive influence within the school and wider community; a strong commitment to social justice within school, family and community; proven leadership skills at school displaying initiative as a member of the College community; and most importantly, empathy to “the other”.

At the College’s 2012 Night of Excellence this award was presented to Cassandra Hamshaw of (then) Year 8. Through her attention to detail in her schoolwork, pursuit of leadership and excellence, as well as her warm and welcoming attitude, Cassandra has demonstrated her commitment to Sionian values and attitudes.

She is a well-respected member of her class, and is a quiet achiever recognised by many of her peers. Cassandra is regularly called upon for assistance and always assists others where she can, without the expectation of recognition. She is an incredibly positive influence on her peers, who see her passion for school opportunities as an ideal to live up to.

Cassandra has actively sought roles as leader, including application for SRC 2013 and Class Leader 2012. She also regularly volunteers to assist in assemblies and prayer. Cassandra’s friendship and encouragement is an inspiration to her peers, and to us all as we continue to remember that being a Daughter of Sion means being conscious of those who may be excluded or marginalised by our society.

This award includes a $500 prize that the recipient is asked to donate to a charity of her choice. Cassandra has donated her prize to Jacob’s Well, a foundation that hopes to break the poverty cycle by sinking fresh water wells in remote tribal villages around the world.

Sr Mary Lotton nds
On Sunday, 14th April, Sr. Patricia celebrated two important events: her 80th Birthday and Diamond Jubilee as a Sister of Our Lady of Sion. The College was a fitting place for the celebration as Sr. Patricia (formerly Sr. Bernadina), was a student here, taught Year 9 at the College in 1959 and 1960, and after completing her university studies, she was named Principal of the College from 1963 – 1974.

Monsignor Terry Curtin and Fr. Michael Wheeler concelebrated the Eucharist which began the celebrations in the College Chapel which was filled to capacity by Patricia’s family, Sisters and many friends. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, Sr. Mary Lotton who had welcomed guests to the celebration, invited all to afternoon tea which was served in the Theodore Staff Dining Room by nine of Patricia’s past students from 1967. As well as Patricia’s two brother-in-laws, her eight nieces and nephews and twenty great nieces and nephews, invited guests included friends from Patricia’s own school days at St. Anne’s Primary School, East Kew, and Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill. Others present came from St. Bridget’s Parish, Greythorn, where Sr Patricia is actively involved, and from the various interest groups in which she participates, including the Biblical Reflection programme, the Our Lady of Sion Sale Past Pupils’ Committee, cards and exercise classes.

During the afternoon tea, Sr. Mary Barbuto, on behalf of all the Sisters, spoke of Sr Patricia’s various service in the Congregation: at the Sale and Box Hill Our Lady of Sion Colleges, in the Sisters’ Leadership Team in Rome, and as Director of the Sion House in Ein Karem, in Jerusalem. A delicious chocolate birthday cake, served with a small glass of champagne, brought the afternoon to a close.

In lieu of gifts, Patricia had suggested that any one wishing to make a donation, could make a small contribution to the Hope Project that the Sisters world-wide had organized to bring water to people in a remote area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa. Guests generously gave donations that amounted to $3,220. This sum will be sent to Rome and taken by the Sisters directly to the Congo in a few months’ time.

In conclusion, Sr. Patricia would like to thank all for making this day very special for her, and for the numerous beautiful cards she received, with words of gratitude, good wishes and prayers.

In this year’s Australia Day Honours, Dr. Marianne Josephine Dacy was awarded Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Dr. Dacy was awarded this honour for her work in the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion and significant contributions to interfaith dialogue.

Dr. Dacy is a past student of Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill, and has been a Sister of Our Lady of Sion since the 1960s.

Some of the many positions held by Dr. Dacy, that saw her offer great support to the work of interfaith dialogue include: Director, Judaica Library, Ratisbonne Institute, Jerusalem, 1979-1982; Founding Senior Archivist, Archive of Australian Judaica, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, since 1983 – current; Honorary Secretary, New South Wales Council of Christians and Jews, since 1992; Co-Chair, International Council of Christians and Jews Conference, 2007.

Dr Dacy is currently secretary of Australian Council of Christians and Jews; and Current Secretary/Treasurer, Australian Association of Jewish Studies.

Dr. Dacy is the author of many articles on Jewish-Christian relations, and is currently engaged in archiving Sydney’s Jewish history at Sydney University for academic research. We send our congratulations on this well-deserved acknowledgement of Sr. Marianne’s life’s work!
From the Archives

Our Lady of Sion College Archives continues to grow, thanks to the many past students who continue to donate memorabilia. Technological advances mean that photographs donated can be scanned and returned to past students. I encourage past students to search out items (especially photos) they have tucked away to help preserve the College’s history. It is only 15 years to the College’s Centenary!

I am seeking further information on the following photos, especially precise dates and year levels?

1960s: Canberra, John Gorton (Prime Minister 1968-1971)

1960s: Susan Lovass, Margaret Logan, Bernadette Grey

Please contact Sandy Nicholson: snicholson@sion.catholic.edu.au

College Chapel Wedding

Past student Angela Wood (Class of 2000) married Ben McLean in our College Chapel on Saturday 23rd February 2013. We wish Angela and Ben every happiness as they start their new life together! It was lovely to have a past student celebrate her special day here at the College.

From the Archives

REUNIONS

CLASS OF 1993 20 YEAR REUNION

Saturday 20th JULY 2013
OUR LADY OF SION COLLEGE
LIBRARY
2.00PM TO 4.30PM

Contact
Karen Davison (nee Byrne)
kazabee@hotmail.com

CLASS OF 1973 40 YEAR REUNION

Saturday 14th September 2013
OUR LADY OF SION COLLEGE
LIBRARY
2.00PM TO 4.30PM

Contact
Elizabeth Crompton (nee Hammond)
rpc7030@bigpond.net.au
or
Robyn McCann
rmccann@sion.catholic.edu.au

Past Student Reunions

On Saturday 23rd February the Class of 1983 celebrated their 30 Year Reunion off-site. Many past students attended this reunion and enjoyed their time of reminiscing!

If you would like to celebrate a reunion at the College please contact Robyn McCann on 9890 9097 or rmccann@sion.catholic.edu.au

Past Student Reunions

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PAST STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Tuesday 6th August, 2013 at 7.30pm
Ratisbonne Board Room
OUR LADY OF SION COLLEGE
All Past Students most welcome