

Friends of Caroline Chisholm

NEWSLETTER

3
July 2011



The patronal feast of Sts Peter and Paul's Old Cathedral in Goulburn was specially observed on 29 June, 2011. The concelebrated Eucharist, with Archbishop Mark Coleridge as principal celebrant, was attended by almost 1,000 people, including the Governor-General Quentin Bryce and other civic and religious leaders. The congregation also sang newly composed lyrics honouring Caroline Chisholm to the perennial hymn-tune *Nan Danket* . . . that's "Now Thank We All Our God".

Archbishop Coleridge's homily fully endorsed the uplifting words (partly reproduced here), doing so in a masterly interweaving with the scriptural readings for the feast (Acts 12:1-11; Psalm 34; 2Tm 2:6-8,17-18; Mt 16:13-19).

The many trials and lengthy journeys of the two apostles, their commitment to Christ and the building-up of the Church, their life of unstinting service, and their fearless speaking of the truth are to be seen in Caroline Chisholm's life and work.

The commemoration of Caroline Chisholm during the Eucharist, as with the Governor-General's attendance, was linked to the unveiling and blessing of a new mosaic on the northern wall of the Old Cathedral. Speaking before the unveiling, the Governor-General praised the beauty of the building, the foresight of the builders, and the extensive restoration work.

The Governor-General spoke about Caroline Chisholm's story, saying "[s]he has been a source of courage, support and inspiration to generations of Australians across our country, and in particular to women". She revealed that Caroline Chisholm "had always been a heroine of mine".

Both Caroline and Australia's first saint, St Mary of the Cross, were "shining lights", the Governor-General said, and then she unveiled the new mosaic.

The new mosaic was next blessed by Archbishop Coleridge, who commented drolly (upon being raised heavenward in an industrial-size cherry picker), "Very few have risen as high as I have". The Artist, Nola Diamantopoulos, had no need to speak on the day, for her creative work of many months was amply displayed.

Moira Sheridan wrote the lyrics for the new hymn, titled "The Emigrant's Friend: A Salute to Caroline Chisholm". The first and final verses follow. The entire hymn will be uploaded to:

www.mrschisholm.com.

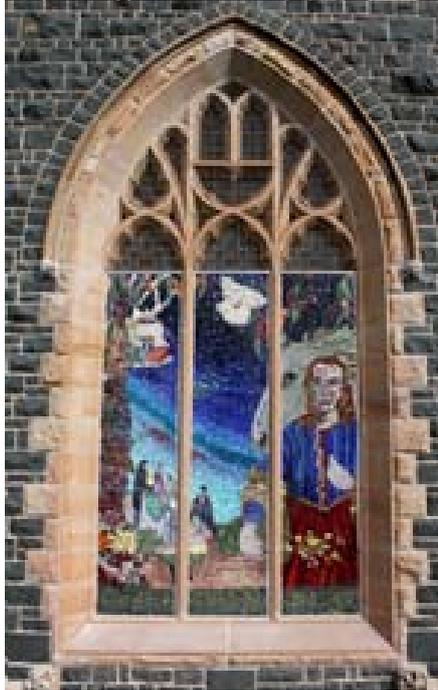
—O—

Now thank we Lord this day for
Caroline Chisholm,
Who sought a better way for
destitute women,
With Jesus in her heart, the Lord
God by her side,
Horse Captain as her steed, her
family helped with pride.

We celebrate today, your life of
trial and triumphs.
Your selfless dedication, to those
who suffered in silence.
Not one to consider, your gift to all
was priceless.
And may you one day be the first
Lay Saint of Australia.

—O—

While the direct address to Caroline Chisholm in the final verse might require some theological conciliation, the reciprocity of the teaching and the believing Church was very much in evidence in this display of faith on the feast of Sts Peter and Paul. Now thank we all our God for this most blessed lay woman.



The Artist, the Governor-General, the Archbishop and the Mosaic

The Rich Insights of the Mosaic

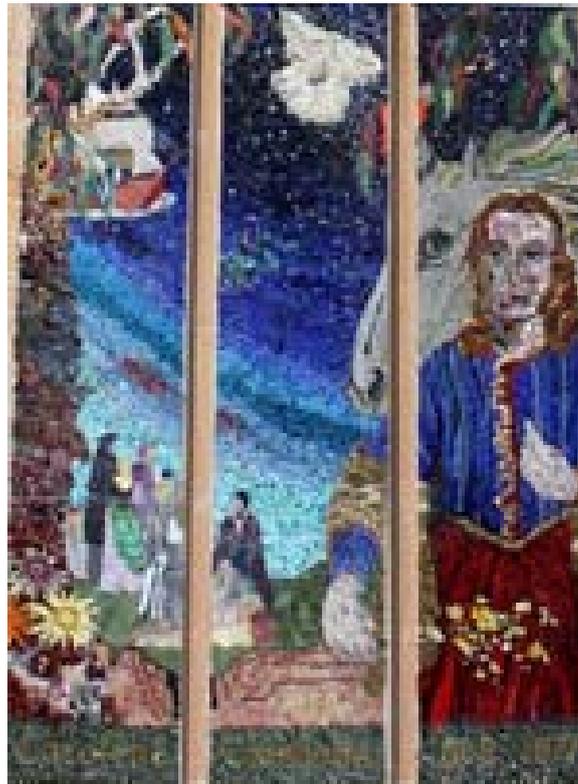
The new mosaic of Caroline Chisholm at Sts Peter and Paul's Old Cathedral, Goulburn, is very like a sacred icon. The more you look closely at it and the more you ponder it, the more you can recognise what is there, and the more you can see and understand.

Was it the deep blue of the heavenly skies and the many stars that caught your eye? That deep blue also portrayed the ocean, on which the newly arriving emigrant ship had sailed.

Did the auburn-haired woman looking directly forward catch your eye first? Or did the gentle eye of the horse named Captain draw you surely into his own confidence?

The woman is, of course, Mrs Chisholm, and she gave the faithful steed the name humourously, recalling her absent husband, who had been recalled to active service in India in 1840.

She worked on alone during the next few years, helping poor emigrants to make a new life in Australia.



Emigrants such as the cluster on the left.

After observing the more obvious in the mosaic, did you register the hovering dove, the Paraclete, that best gift of God above? Or did the colour and vibrancy of the human and the everyday screen the fact of the Holy Spirit . . . on first or later viewings?

The mosaic artist, however, has placed the Holy Spirit at the top of the middle panel. At the guiding centre of the world, one could say.

A fruitful work is progressing in this down under, Southern Cross land.

And what a splendid picture of creation it is. We have the strangely ripe Australian sky, landscape, fauna and flora: ochre cracked earth and green welcoming fields, and a multitude of adapted plants and creatures, including flannel flowers and a possum.

In the foreground, however, is Caroline Chisholm, who has in her right hand a spray of golden wattle. She stands firm and confident, pointing upwards to the hovering dove.

Nola Diamantopoulos, the mosaic artist, designed and carried out the Caroline Chisholm mosaic. There are more than 875,000 pieces in the three panels, each 300cm high and 72.5cm wide. (That's almost ten feet high!)

The principal pieces are smalti, which were cut from slabs of molten glass that had been mixed with metal oxides to give an often intense colour. The process ensures durability and non-fading lustre.

Nola sourced traditional and ecological smalti from Italy and contemporary smalti from Asia and Mexico. She incorporated local greenstone chips, petrified wood donated by the Goulburn Gem Society and semi-precious stones

such as agate and ruse quartz. The pink, red and yellow mookaite tiles used for the tree were sourced from Western Australian jasper. As well, there's gold and silver smalti and non-reflective marble.

Neither the Newsletter images nor its words do the mosaic justice; it needs to be seen to be fully appreciated. It is a most fitting enhancement to the Old Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul, a building of national heritage significance and the central place of worship for the local Catholic community.

A Saviour of Living Cargoes, Carole Walker's well-received biography of Caroline Chisholm, is now being reprinted. For more details, visit the website of Connor Court Publishing, the new publisher.

The Kelly Sisters and Caroline Chisholm

Ann and Peggy Kelly were born in County Louth, Ireland, and both came to the Colony of New South Wales in 1842 as assisted immigrants under the Bounty scheme. Ken Riordan, a great grandson of Ann, is working on the family history. His research has found that the Kelly sisters were helped by Caroline Chisholm. This article relates their story, concerning which less is known about Peggy than Ann.

Ann was certified as being of good character by William Crilly of Grange Bellew, County Louth, who was possibly a relation of her mother, and by Patrick Powderly of "the Mountains of Dunlear". Being young single women and because their parents, Gerry and Martha Kelly, did not accompany them, they had to travel under the protection of a suitable adult. In their case it was John Crelly (or Crilly) and his wife who fulfilled that role.

They travelled to Liverpool, England. On 24 October, 1841, they embarked on the "William Sharples", a ship of 794 tons. The ship set anchor in Port Jackson on 29 January, 1842. Of the 365 passengers who embarked, eight died during the three-months journey, either from "consumption", "convulsions" or "inflammation of the bowels". As to the passengers generally, the ship's surgeon commented their "conduct was very quiet and orderly".

The passengers' list gave Ann's age as 19 and Peggy's as 23. Both were listed as servants, but Peggy's entry added she was also a "Certified Housekeeper". Neither could read or write.

John Crelly, their protector, was soon offered employment, and he and his wife left the ship. In keeping with the Bounty system policy, the Kelly sisters were maintained on-board for ten days after their arrival in Sydney. After ten days, the ship's captain could require them to go ashore. This occurred, but the ship's papers recorded that both were "forwarded to Mrs Chisholm".

In January, 1842, the Female Immigrants' Home in Bent Street was where Mrs Chisholm

provided accommodation for such new arrivals. The Kelly sisters would have been interviewed by Mrs Chisholm, as that was the standard practice. How long they were there, and whether they initially went to work situations in or close to Sydney, is not known.

What the family history next relates of Ann Kelly is that she married James Mills, a 42 year old widower, on 16 September, 1842. The marriage took place in Port Macquarie, and was conducted in the Church of Scotland. James, who had been born in Bath, England, came to the Colony as a soldier and guard on a convict ship in 1828. He took his discharge in June, 1833 and received the same month a land grant at Picton. He left the grant some time later, possibly after the 1838 drought or because of poor prices for rural products. James subsequently worked on one of the big cattle stations on the Macleay River, about 30 miles north of Port Macquarie.

Mrs Chisholm had an emigration depot at Port Macquarie, which was reached by the steamer "Shamrock". It seems likely that the Kelly sisters went there and then to local jobs.

Ann and James Mills had twelve children, as well as the care of a son from his first marriage. Sadly, when 50 or 51 years of age, Ann died from gastritis and dysentery in 1874. As for Peggy, she is thought to have married a man named Brady from the Macleay River district, after which the family history lacks further detail.

Ken Riordan relates that there was no family remembrance of the connection with Caroline Chisholm. It is possible, he suggests, that the marriage of Catholic Ann in a Presbyterian church might have contributed to a non-remembering of what had happened in the family's very early days in the Colony.

Thanks are extended to Ken Riordan for the information and narrative in this article. Let's hope more of the story of the Kelly sisters who were forwarded to the care of Mrs Chisholm is gleaned from the historical records.

Inspired by Caroline Chisholm

The Caroline Chisholm Society, established in 1969, recently reiterated in its revised strategy that it continues to be inspired by their patron. Ms Helen Cooney, Chair of the Board, said, "Caroline Chisholm's patience and energy are surely an inspiration for all of us who work to support pregnancy, children and families".

The Society is a non-denominational, non-political charity, initially based in the Moonee Valley area but now also offering services from a site in Caroline Springs and with a largely volunteer presence in the Goulburn Valley. At the heart of the Society's work is support for women to continue their pregnancy in a safe, nurturing environment, Helen said.

To that end, social and community workers, service support staff and volunteers are engaged in pregnancy counselling, material aid, family support and a range of related services. To name a few specifics, there is group work, one-to-one telephone counselling, pregnancy testing and options counselling, pregnancy loss counselling, and in-home support.

The revised strategy is described in a new brochure released by the Society. Download it from: www.carolinechisholmsociety.com.au/donations request it by phone on 03 9370 3933, or write to PO Box 846, Moonee Ponds. Victoria. 3039



The new brochure was part of the launching of the Society's current appeal for financial donations. Project 20,000 is aimed at attracting regular credit card contributions for pregnancy counselling and material aid. Also very welcome are one-off donations for strategic projects such as the Caroline Springs site. The brochure has more detailed information.

The Society, said Helen, "has respect for life, is compassionate and caring, values social justice, believes in empowerment of women and families, recognises diversity, and operates accountability according to best practice".

And the Society is, like Mrs Chisholm and her husband Archibald, very intent on carrying out the work entrusted to it.

A good response to the appeal for financial donations will help to continue and expand the Society's work

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End-note 1: On the left are two stained glass windows in St Mary's Church in Hamilton, Victoria.

One is identified as Mary MacKillop . . . and, asked the enquirer, did the window predate both the beatification and the canonization of St Mary of the Cross? The answer seems to be "yes".

What about the other figure? This must be Mrs Chisholm, but with artichoke lower limbs. Why?

End-note 2: A crocus was long ago named after Caroline Chisholm. In *Seventy-Five Popular Flowers and How to Cultivate Them*, published in Boston, USA, 1870, Edward Sprague Rand jnr, said it was the *best* white crocus and flowered very early in Spring.

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