

Aotearoa-New Zealand and Samoa

Who we are

Nineteenth century developments

Our founder

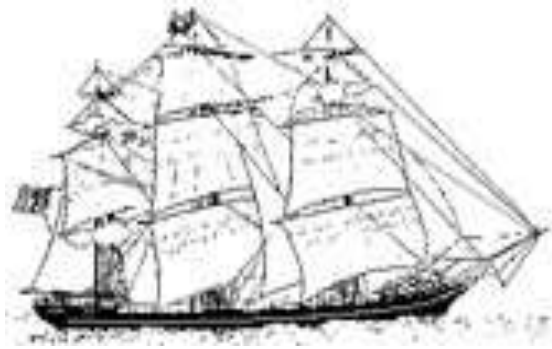
On Christmas Day, 1861, French woman Euphrasie Barbier (1829-1893) founded a religious congregation, *Religieuses de Notre Dame des Missions (RNDM)*. Euphrasie, a courageous and determined French woman from Normandy, was from a young age, attracted to the foreign missions. She first joined a newly established missionary congregation, the Sisters of Calvary in Cuves, France, but political, historical and religious events in that country meant the Sisters went to London to work with the Fathers of the Oratory. However, Euphrasie was concerned that the Sisters of Calvary were becoming too involved in supporting the Oratorians' rapidly expanding ministry and were forgetting about the foreign missions. She also believed that their busy apostolic lives meant little time left for prayer and contemplation.

When Euphrasie learnt that the French Marist Bishop Philippe Viard, (1809-1872), of Wellington was looking for religious sisters to teach in his diocese, she responded positively to this opportunity. She and a young English novice companion left London and arrived in Lyon on 15 August 1861 where the Marist priests encouraged her to begin a religious formation programme for French women who wanted to join the Marist mission in the Pacific. Euphrasie enthusiastically began this work, hoping to found a congregation of women deeply committed to prayer and contemplation, to apostolic work with women and children, and to community life. A great love for contemplation, community and mission were to become defining features of the newly-founded congregation.

Her dream began to be realized when Euphrasie and her companion began their novitiate in Lyon on 25 December 1861. The new congregation was registered with the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in Rome in 1862, Euphrasie made her perpetual vows on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 3 June 1864, and on 18 August 1864, just three days after their first profession, the first four RNDM sisters left France via England, for their mission in New Zealand. It is apparent that the Institute de Notre Dame des Missions was committed to foreign missions from its beginnings, and within a short time young women were attracted to the new congregation.



Euphrasie Barbier, (Mère Marie du Sacre Cœur de Jésus), born in Caen, Normandy, France in 1829, and died in Sturry, England, 1893



SS Walter Hood, the wooden clipper on which four French sisters travelled from England on 2 October 1864, arriving firstly in Sydney, Australia. The sisters spent some time in Sydney and on 10 February boarded the "Lord Ashley" which went to Wellington. After a few days the sisters boarded a smaller ship to Napier, arriving in Napier on 25 February 1865.

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/MaritimeHeritage/researchcentre/wreck/walterhood.htm>

Soon after their arrival in Napier, the Sisters involved themselves in teaching the European children of the rapidly growing settler population and Maori girls, the latter at the school which was first known as the Providence and renamed St Joseph's Maori Girls' College, when it was relocated to Greenmeadows, after the 1931 Napier earthquake.



L-R Sisters Marie des Anges Marie Ste Anne Marie St Jean Marie St Madeleine

Founders of Napier in 1865

Before the end of the nineteenth century, convents had been established in Christchurch, Nelson, New Plymouth, Ashburton, Hamilton, Pukekohe, Opotiki, Leeston, Stratford and Rangiora. RNDMs were soon teaching in parish primary schools and in congregation-owned secondary schools. More often than not, they also cared for orphans.



Early days in Opotiki



Christchurch 1882, demolished in 2012 after the 2011 earthquake

RNDMs in Oceania in the Nineteenth Century

In 1871 RNDMs from France joined the Society of Mary priests and brothers and lay women known as Tertiaries who worked with Marist Fathers in the islands of Oceania. Soon the RNDMs along with Tertiaries, some of whom joined the young Congregation, were involved in various works in Tonga, Samoa and Wallis Islands.

But there were problems ahead. Euphrasie's insistence on the need for a cloistered life style for her community and the difficulty other missionaries working in Oceania had with that position meant that the RNDMs left the Islands in 1878, and would not return until almost a century later.

Twentieth Century Developments

Aotearoa-New Zealand

1900-1965 The congregation expanded rapidly in the twentieth century in the years prior to Vatican II (1962-65), with RNDMs staffing more than fifty parish primary schools, and teaching in their own secondary schools which usually had boarding schools attached. Vocations to religious life were plentiful.



Final Profession, Hamilton, 1956, Sisters M. Genevieve Punch, M. Lawrence O'Toole, M. Philippa Reed, M. Catherine Curry, M. Cornelius Crowley, M. Rose Malone, M. Beatrice Hammersley, M. Phoebe Hassan, M. Chanel O'Donnell

1966-2000 Vatican II meant extraordinary changes for the Catholics all over the world. Catholic Sisters everywhere were among the first to respond enthusiastically to the Council's call for renewal.

The call to change and renewal saw more RNDMs being sent on mission outside of Aotearoa-New Zealand, and embracing new ministries at home. This period of change also coincided with a decline in the number of young women seeking admission to religious life. Ministries undertaken by the Sisters in the decades after Vatican II included chaplaincy work in hospitals, prisons, educational institutions, ethnic, youth and refugee communities. Other RNDMs were involved in adult and tertiary level education, spiritual direction and counselling and parish ministry.

Samoa

In 1970, the RNDMs returned to Samoa, to the island of Savai'i to teach in the primary school at Fusi, and in 1971 began to build a co-educational secondary school at Logoipulotu, where they taught until 1996. Between 1970 and today, more than 38 Mission Sisters have worked in Samoa in a variety of ministries that included education, the establishment of an agricultural project that would provide young Samoan men with practical skills for working on the land, pastoral ministry and working with young women interested in joining the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.



*Early days in Samoa 1972
L-R Sarah Greenlees, Joan Robertson (lay missionary), Bishop Pio Taofinu'u, Patricia Barrett, Cynthia Kearney, Pusa Fonoti, Mary Jerome*



Losa Tofilau (L) friend, Monika Vaipuna (R) planting trees and shrubs in the church ground to celebrate the 69th anniversary of Samoa's Independence.

Our two Samoan RNDMs both work in Apia on the island of Upolu. Losa Tofilau teaches at the Theological College and is very involved with St Vincent de Paul work. Monika Vaipuna is the Principal of St Peter & Paul's Primary School.

An Important Twenty-first Century Development

This initiative began in March 2004 with two young Sisters from Myanmar arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand to begin English Language Studies and, where possible, to gain professional qualifications that would be useful in their different ministries when they returned home or to overseas ministry.

Shwe Mya and Hla Mel were the first of these sisters, and to date we have enjoyed 43 Sisters from RNDM Provinces in **Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India**. These Sisters lived with us in our local communities whilst studying at Institutes of Technology in Nelson, Petone or Taranaki, as well as Private English Teaching Schools.

In addition, we delighted in having **Benedictine Sisters from South Korea** joining us for study purposes. The mutual sharing of these Sisters with Sisters in our local Communities and beyond has been a rich blessing for all involved.

Sadly, Covid brought a temporary halt to this venture. However, plans are now in place resume once again.



Srs Maria Do Thi Xuan Hong, Anna Vo Thi Anh Nhu, Merle Hiscock at Nelson Convent



Irene May Moon Si, Margaret Aye Aye Maw , Rosa May Wah Thin and Merle Hiscock enjoying the beauty of Percy's Reserve in Petone



Merle Hiscock, Irene May Moon Si, Margaret Monaghan, Rosa May Wah Thin, Anne Sklenars, Margaret Aye Aye Maw, Annette Young, about to leave on their journey back to Myanmar November 202

Province of Aotearoa-New Zealand and Samoa today

North Island

Whangarei

Auckland

Hamilton

Cambridge *near Hamilton*

Opotiki *near Whakatane*

New Plymouth

Gisborne

Napier

Taradale-Hastings

Dannevirke *near Palmerston North*

Lower Hutt/Petone

Waikanae *near Levin*

South Island

Nelson

Kaiapoi

Christchurch



**Provincial Leadership Team
Aotearoa New Zealand/Samoa
2021-2023**

Marie Finn, Margaret Monaghan
(Province Leader), Anne Sklenars,
Merle Hiscock

Ministries of the Sisters in the Province

The Sisters are engaged in various forms of pastoral work both within parishes and beyond.

Ministries include the following:

- The ministry of daily, reflective prayer together for the needs of all people and the needs of Earth
- Involvement in schools throughout the Province visits
- Spiritual direction given by those who are qualified in this field
- Retreat facilitation in parishes and for diocesan and chaplaincy groups
- Ministers of the Eucharist and of the Word
- Hosting small groups for sharing of life and faith
- Participating in Ecological Groups such as Laudato 'Si initiatives
- Accompaniment of those who need a listening ear in times of difficulty
- Home visits, Rest Home visits and supporting bereaving families
- Advocacy and support for migrants and vulnerable people in the parish and beyond
- Involvement with food distribution and other basic needs for families and people in need both through St Vincent di Paul Society and as members of the Congregation.
- International on-line involvement with Sisters involved in courses across the Congregation
- Assisting sisters in the Congregation who need English language support
- Supporting one another, particularly in times of sickness and death
- Parish Administration and Pastoral involvement
- Charism Promotion and Support
- Ministry of Leadership
- Hospital Chaplaincy

Auckland

There are twelve RNDMs residing in Auckland. Six of the sisters are living in Units in Ellerslie with the rest of the sisters residing in Herne Bay, Highland Park Royal Oak, Whangarei. One of the sisters in Herne Bay is in residential care at St Joseph's Home.



*Back row: Moyra Foster, Lorraine Lawson, Leone McIndoe, Geraldine Donovan, Bernadette O'Neil, Joan Parker.
Front row: Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader), Elizabeth Beeler, Adrienne Dunlop, Mary Molloy, Anne Sklenars (PLT Liaison Sr)
Not present: Mary Maitland, Susan Smith, Margaret-Mary Hunter*



Susan Smith and Mary Maitland,
Whangarei, February 2023



Margaret-Mary Hunter

At St Mark's School, Pakuranga, the young pupils have been learning how to be kaitiaki, guardians of their environment, using their heads, heart and hands, to be good news to all they meet – plants, creatures and people.

Mary Maitland with "Special Character" leaders at St Mark's Pakuranga, March 2023



Waikato

There are thirteen RNDMs residing in Waikato, Cambridge, Hamilton and Opotiki. One of the sisters is living at the Atawhai Assisi Home and Hospital in Hamilton.



Back row: Anne Sklenars, Marie Finn, Colleen Morey, Ann Marie Jones, Margaret Mullin, Merle Hiscock (PLT Liaison Sr) , Raewyn Hogan, Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader)
Front row: Barbara Cameron, Shelia O' Toole, Mary-Ellen O'Sullivan, Peggy O'Neil, Mary Richards
Not present: Muriel Kivell, Mary Celine Deane, Dorothy Dickson, Philippa Reid



Mary Celine Deane



Dorothy Dickson



Shelia O'Toole

In 2019 Shelia O'Toole made a return visit to Vietnam and caught up with many of the families whom she had assisted. Shelia (Sister Mary Laurence) spent a total of 19 years in Vietnam teaching and working in the communities. Shelia spent time among the leper community. Shelia was in Vietnam during WW11 and was a POW for a few weeks and one of the last to leave at the end of the war.



In 2023, artwork done by Philippa Reid in the 1980s' was located, having been stored in the garage at the convent in Petone. The artwork is a series of five pieces depicting the time of entering the convent till First Profession.



Philippa has written and illustrated many books – "Under the Raising Sun" (Burma War), Euphrasie, and illustrated 3 children's books "Gathering Firewood", "Old Black Joe", "Fella Neil" are just a few. The children's books were written by Sr Mary Marcella Roache.

Taranaki

There are seven RNDMs residing in New Plymouth. Three of whom reside in the Adele Senior Living and one sister is in residential care at Chalmers Rest Home.



Marie Finn, (PLT Liaison Sr), Lidwina Van Beers, Martha Szymanski, Veronica Keaveney, Mary Wyss, Patricia Mary Ford, Colleen Edgecombe

Not present: Connie Hurley



125th Jubilee of Sat Joseph's School



Veronica Keaveney, Mary Wyss and Martha Szymanski attended the 125 Jubilee of St Joseph's School in Stratford. The school's Kapa Haka welcomed everyone to the Jubilee Mass. Mary Wyss carried in the candle at the beginning of Mass.

The school continues to flourish today, and the RNDM Charism is visible in the school environment, as well as in the values of the school.

Hawkes Bay

There are ten RNDMs residing in Hawkes Bay, living in Gisborne, Dannevirke, Napier, Palmerston North. Two of the sisters are living in residential care.



Back row: Jeanette McRae, Frances Wilson, Maureen Duncan, Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader), Muriel Kivell (now in Waikato) Helen O'Sullivan

Front row: Carmel Cassin, Sarah Greenlees, Mary Rose Holderness, Merle Hiscock (PLT Liaison Sr)

Not present: Carmel Cole, Ann Martin

Ann Martin



After 12 years in Leadership Carmel Cole moved to Dannevirke in 2021. Carmel is involved in the local parish, singing in the parish choir and secretary of the liturgy committee. As a trained Budget Mentor Carmel works for the local budgeting service at Tararua REAP (Rural Education Activities Programme). She is a volunteer at St Vincent de Paul. Carmel loves gardening, growing food for herself and giving to the parishioners and to St Vincent de Paul for food parcels.

Carmel lives in the Convent in Dannevirke and often has visitors as they pass on their way to Napier.

Wellington

There are nine RNDMs residing in Wellington Community. Living in Lower Hutt, Waikanae and Nelson. One of the sisters lives in residential care at the Aroha Care Centre for the Elderly.



Annette Young, Barbara Henley, Merle Hiscock, Mary Paul Hodgson, Pauline Leonard, Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader), Valerie Lawson, Anne Sklenars (PLT Liaison Sr)

Nelson Community



Maria Josef Park and Colleen King-Turner

Waikanae Community



Barbara Henley on her e-bike

The Wellington community will increase by one in June 2023 when Patricia Boyd returns from her mission in France.



Christchurch

There are thirteen RNDMs residing in Christchurch. Eight sisters live in a unit complex in Addington, the rest are living in Woolston and Kaiapoi. Two of the sisters are in residential care at the Nazareth Community of Care, Sydenham.



Back row: Gael Henry, Anna Maria Persico, Clare Murphy, Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader), Marie Finn (PLT Liaison Sr), Christina Cathro, Kathleen Prendergast, Anne Marie Shine
Front row: Rosalene Hoban, Theresa Galvin, Amelda Lindsay, Margaret Purdie, Betty Dwyer
Not Present: Margaret Hoban, Roleen Curtain



Margaret Hoban

Roleen Curtain



Gael
Kaiapo



Henry with a group of
students creating a garden

RNDMs from Aotearoa New Zealand/Samoa working overseas

Euphrasie Barbier's dream for her Sisters was that they were missionary everywhere – in their own countries and in the 'foreign missions'.

Currently four RNDMs are working overseas.

Australia

Maureen Dwan-



Italy

Josephine Kane - Congregational Leader

Margaret Scott -is working in Rome as the
Coordinator for Care for Our Common Home
Commission within the Congregation.



Kenya

Salota Aimalefoa
– One of the areas
Salota works in is
with the Widow's
Group in Machakos

Eco-corner

In 2016, some of the Sisters began sharing their experiences of caring for creation in our province newsletter. These contributions, found in “Eco-corner,” were very much about actions rather than words. Our actions were locally based and thus became a new way of engaging in mission. We were not necessarily talking to other Catholics or to other sisters, but to people of all faiths and beliefs. Our “Eco-corner” was resurrected in 2021, and below are just three stories of how Sisters have been involved in caring for creation. There are many other stories.

- Cynthia Kearney in Gisborne along with other women undertook to leave Mother Earth better than they found her by using natural fertilisers such as seaweed collected at the local beach, walking or biking rather than driving, replacing glad/cling wrap with cloth covers, using bamboo toothbrushes and growing their own food and flowers where possible.



- In Samoa, Losa Tofilau and Monika Vaipuna, along with others, recognised that “the heaven we long for is not in the future. It lies at our feet, at our fingertips, in what our eyes see, and our tongue taste. Our world is not just a useful resource which supplies us with food, a place we can exploit, and then leave behind as we head for heaven. Planet Earth is a living, breathing, precious entity to be cherished daily.” They engaged in a tree planting programme that would protect their country, one of the Pacific Island so badly affected by climate change, and none of it the fault of the Samoan people living there.



- Helen O’Sullivan and Frances Wilson in Napier undertook to care for monarch butterflies. Helen writes: *Laudato Si’* challenges us to “care for the natural environment and all people ...,” and so a new mission has started in Napier – caring for the monarch butterfly. Monarch butterflies were first sighted in New Zealand in 1873, and arrived of their own volition, apparently island hopping from North America. I am always on the lookout for swan plant seed pods whilst out biking, and have found seed pods in parks and other public places, and so began my mission to plant and harvest the seeds. The caterpillars have voracious appetites before they finish their journey as beautiful monarch butterflies so plenty of swan plants needed.



The Spirituality of RNDMs

Spirituality is the inner strength or source that allows disciples of Jesus to fulfil the great commandments of love of God and love of neighbour. One of the fruits of Euphrasie's great love of God and neighbour, a love that motivated her to send her sisters to the ends of the world, was that she believed that all mission had its source in the mystery of the Trinity. What did Euphrasie mean when she told her sisters time and time again that their mission had its source in the mystery of the Trinity? For Euphrasie belief in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit meant that she understood that creation was the work of the Father who then sent the Son, the Logos or Word into the world which God so loved. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Father and Son sent the Spirit into the world. The idea of sending was inseparable from mission for Euphrasie. Euphrasie's sisters were to grow in their love of this mystery at work in their lives through contemplative prayer.

RNDM Spirituality before Vatican II (1962-1965)

Liturgical prayer or prayer of the church was important for all RNDMs who were usually at daily Mass in the parish church or more frequently in their convent chapels, and who prayed the Office together every day. Much of their prayer life in the decades prior to Vatican II was what has come to be called "devotional". This meant praying in community, or alone, such traditional prayers as the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, novenas to Mary or the saints. Such prayerful devotions sustained RNDMs in their demanding lives.

RNDM Spirituality after Vatican II

Since the Vatican Council, the spirituality of the RNDMs in Aotearoa New Zealand/Samoa has been enriched by a growing appreciation of God's Word in our prayer life. For example, RNDMs have been able to enhance their understanding of the mission of the Spirit in their own lives, in society and in those with whom they interact in their ministries. What does this mean?

Euphrasie's understanding of mission as being sent was deeply influenced by her prayerful meditation on John 20:21 "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'." They were happy to be sent to the ends of the earth to bring the good news to those who lived in darkness and the shadow of death (see Luke 1:79).

As RNDMs turned to the Bible, studied and prayed more, they gained fresh insights about the role of the Spirit, and what shape their mission should take. In Luke 4:16-18 the author reveals that the Spirit was there with Jesus in his mission to liberate the poor and oppressed: "When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. Jesus stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free'."

RNDMs were also challenged by texts such as Gal 3: 28 which taught that through the gift of the Spirit received at baptism, "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus".

Texts such as those found in Genesis 1, the Story of Creation, reveal that all that God created is good. RNDMs learnt too from Wisdom 1:7 that the "Spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said." These and similar texts served to remind RNDMs to care for God's gift of creation so seriously harmed by human exploitation.

The Old and the New

Petone Convent



Petone Convent 2015 the day the Sisters moved out



The new convent opened 2018

Ferry Road Convent 1982



In February 2011 Christchurch suffered a large earthquake



The interior of the Convent exposed after the Chapel and Cloister Hall had been removed



The last clearing of Ferry Road

Events

Mission Expo 2022



Barbara Henley and Irene May Moon Si (Myanmar) at the RNDM information stall at Viard College, Wellington.

150 years of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions celebrated in Nelson



Margaret Monaghan (Province Leader), Margaret Aye Aye Maw (Myanmar) Colleen King Turner, Maria Josef Park. Planting a Pohutukawa tree in the grounds of St Joseph's School to honour 150 years of the Mission Sisters in Nelson

The first two sisters to arrive in Nelson were Marie St Raphael and Marie St Michael who landed on February 9, 1871. Within six weeks they were joined by Superior Marie St Madeleine and Marie St Pierre. The sisters were immediately immersed in parish and community life and commenced teaching at St Mary's School which had 117 pupils. Only Sister M Michel could speak English. Life was not one of luxury for the sisters – often relying on the charity of the local Catholic community. The first convent was opened in 1875.



The sign for the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions outside the present convent in Nelson

Prayer Garden Blessing at St Joseph's Catholic School Morrinsville

A contemplative place for students, staff and visitors to the school



Barbara Cameron, Andera Devane Principal of St Joseph's, Margaret Mullin & Ann Marie Jones



Blessing over the garden

Sacred Heart College New Plymouth



Colleen Edgecombe and Mary Wyss planting a native tree on a section of the lower field at Sacred Heart College, New Plymouth. The section bounded on one side by the Waiwhakaiho River, has been dedicated to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Mission who began this college in 1884.

A new member of the New Zealand, All Blacks Rugby Team



Annette Young from the Wellington community with All Blacks, Nepo Laulala and Beauden Barrett.

St Patrick's Catholic School, Panmure



Lorraine Lawson was farewelled by St Patrick's Catholic School, Panmure in a moving school assembly. This tribute culminated 30 years of faithful teaching service at St Patrick's and a 40+ years of teaching, ministry, supporting hundreds of students and parents in various parts of the country. The sentiments, prayers and tears expressed at the final assembly is testament to how much the community valued Lorraine.

St Joseph's Maori Girls College, Greenmeadows, Napier - 150th Jubilee 2019

Some photographs taken at the event

Sisters attending the opening event



A collage of attending Sisters



Celebrating Mass in the School Chapel



Display of photographs and archive



Gathering 2023



Little did we know when we met at St Francis Friary in 2021, that Covid would soon be arriving in our country, depriving us for nearly 3 years from future Gatherings.

So our Gathering, during Easter Week in 2023, was a much appreciated time of being with Sisters once again from across our Province.

Thirty-four Sisters were able to meet, and focus was offered for opportunities to re-connect, sharing our stories, praying together and reflecting on our journey. This then led to questions around “what is the invitation for us as we live our now and continue preparing for our future”?

Sandra Winton OP offered her Dominican experiences on their recent journey in living their present and preparing for their future. This generated much reflection and discussion, taking into account that our structure of governance differs from that of the Dominicans.

To extend the Gathering experience to all our Sisters, those who took part in the Gathering were invited to share with their respective Community on their return home.



Jubilees

RNDMs in Aotearoa-New Zealand /Samoa over the past few years have celebrated important Jubilees. Sisters gathered to celebrate the lives of those sisters- 75th Marie Fauvel, 75th Patricia Mary Ford, 70th Sarah Greenlees, 70th June Walsh, 70th Martha Szymanski, 70th Betty Dwyer, 60th Annette Young, 60th Kathleen Prendergast, 60th Maureen Dwan, 60th Ann Marie Jones, 60th Pauline Leonard, 60th Merle Hiscock, 60th Colleen King-Turner, 60th Maureen Richardson, 60th Roleen Curtain, 60th Barbara Cameron, 60th Margaret Mullin, 50th Colleen Edgecombe, 50th Anna Maria Persico -reaching important milestones as religious women. There was indeed much to remember and for which to thank God.



Annette Young



Barbara Cameron
& Margaret Mullin



Merle Hiscock, Pauline Leonard
& Colleen Edgecombe



Kathleen Prendergast



Sarah Greenlees



Ann Marie Jones



Patricia Mary Ford



Betty Dwyer



Martha Szymanski



Anna Maria Persico & Colleen King-Turner



Roleen Curtain

RNDMs and Schools

Euphrasie Barbier saw the education of women and children as a priority for the members of the congregation she founded. The various RNDM histories all demonstrate that within a few days of their arrival in a new country, RNDMs were busy teaching in primary schools, and establishing congregation-owned secondary schools, faithful to what Euphrasie had included in the Constitutions she had written for her sisters: "[The Sisters'] special end is to aid humbly and to the best of their ability to extend the Kingdom of God in souls by devoting themselves to the instruction and Christian education of children and women, above all in infidel and non-Catholic countries" (*Constitutions* approved by the Vatican in 1890).

In Aotearoa-New Zealand, the Integration of Catholic schools from the 1980s into the state education system meant fewer sisters and more lay people were involved in teaching. However, RNDMs have continued their involvement in both the secondary and primary schools with which they have historically and contemporaneously been associated in the following ways.

- providing professional training programmes for teachers on the ethos of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions;
- setting up college archives;
- membership of Boards of Trustees;
- involvement in volunteer remedial literacy and Maths programmes in primary and secondary schools;
- Board member for the Tafesilafai (Samoan) Community's Early Learning Programme;
- ensuring the involvement of schools–teachers and students–in supporting different RNDM missions in Asia, Africa and the Pacific;
- providing mission-awareness programmes for students;
- organising meetings for the Principals and DRS personnel staff working in Colleges begun by RNDMs;
- responsible for starting the annual Mission Cup (Netball) tournament between the different secondary schools which the Congregation had founded. This, in turn, encouraged the start of the annual Te Toa Hockey Tournament for the different Colleges while Valerie Lawson was Principal of Sacred Heart College, Lower Hutt;
- the appointment of an RNDM to visit schools on a regular basis. Hamilton-based Anne Sklenars currently is involved in this important work which involves her with both staff and students in a variety of ways. Most importantly, she works with teachers and students so that they grow in their understanding of the RNDM way of life and mission. Anne can be contacted at 027 3332224, anne.sklenars@rndm.org.nz

RNDM Past Pupils, Associates and Friends

From the arrival of the first RNDMs in Aotearoa-New Zealand in 1865, the Sisters have always relied on the support of lay people to help them in their different ministries. Rural communities in which RNDMs lived and worked, generously ensured steady supplies of meat and farm produce, or wood for fires, while school committees ensured that schools were well maintained and kept spic and span in the pre-integration era. Past pupils, too, continued to be supportive of the schools and colleges in which they had been educated and had come to know the RNDMs.

Today friends, often enough past pupils of the schools in which the RNDMs taught, continue to be part of the Sisters' life in Aotearoa-New Zealand. From the 1990s onwards, RNDM Associate groups were formed which met with the Sisters in places where they had been long established—Napier, Hamilton, Lower Hutt, Nelson or Christchurch. Auckland has always had a strong past pupils' group, **Sisters of the Mission Past Pupils and Friends Association**, who see financial support of the Congregation's overseas missions as important.

RNDM Associates are those lay people who believe that our way of life of living in community, our commitment to contemplative prayer and our missionary outreach are realities with which they wish be associated.

Contacts for Past Pupils

Auckland	Sisters of the Mission Past Pupils and Friends Association Helen Howley, ghowley@ihug.co.nz
Napier	Convent Past Pupils' Association Jeanette Driebergs, driebergs@clear.net.nz
Greenmeadows	St Joseph's Maori Girls Past Pupils Association The Principal, Private Bag 6031, Hawkes Bay Mail Centre, Napier 4142 stjomaori@sjmgc.school.nz , 06.844.8461
Nelson	Convent Girls' Past Pupils Yolanda Persico, 58 Weka Street, Nelson 7010, y.s.persico@hotmail.com 03 539 0011

Contacts for RNDM Associates, Past Pupils & Friends

Napier	Sarah Greenlees RNDM , sarahgrndm@xtra.co.nz , 021 24242989
Nelson	Maria Josef Park, RNDM , mjparkmaria@gmail.com , 022 6482687
Ashburton	Mary Schmack mdsmck27@gmail.com

Adele Senior Living Ltd

In the late 1980s, the Province Leadership Team began the process of providing a facility for the care of older RNDMs. It was decided to refurbish our former convent building at 10 Pukaka Street, New Plymouth, so that it could accommodate up to thirty people. In 1990 the Mission Rest Home was opened providing a welcoming milieu for RNDMs and other people in need of more sustained care. The Mission Rest Home was closed in 2018 and re-opened that year as the Adele Senior Living.

It is named after our Foundress, Adele Euphrasie Barbier.

It is an RNDM ministry to the elderly of all denominations or none and is run on Christian principles.

It provides reasonable rental accommodation to independent seniors 65 years of age and over.

This rent is all-inclusive of expenses – meals, electricity, wi-fi, laundry, and housekeeping.

It is managed each day by lay staff and governed by a Board of Directors of which Sr Margaret Monaghan is the Chairperson.

The Chapel provides a place of prayer and peace for all who live at Adele and for all who visit. Services of the Word and Communion are held twice a week and are presided over by Sr Mary Wyss who lives in New Plymouth. Over the years, several of our Sisters have lived at Adele Senior Living. Currently, there are three Sisters living there. They appreciate being part of a lifegiving community with companionship and a sense of belonging.



The Board L-R Kevin Murphy, Grant Novak, Margaret Monaghan, Madeleine Brouwers (Manager)

Mary Wyss presiding at a Communion Service in the Chapel

Honours and Awards

The following Sisters have been recognised for their services to New Zealand and the British Empire

C.N.Z.M: Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (3rd highest award)



Awarded for a prominent national or international role, leading role in regional affairs or distinguished contribution to an area of activity.

Awarded to:

Shelia O'Toole – Sr M Laurence 2004

Q.S.O: Queen's Service Order (4th highest award)



Recognises valuable voluntary service to the community or faithful service to the Crown or public service. Usually awarded for service at a national level.

Awarded to:

Kathleen Gibbs – Sr M Crescentia	1982
Shelia O'Toole – Sr M Laurence	1986
Mary White – Mary St Edmund	1992
Jeanne Guyot – Sr M Leone	1992
Valerie Lawson – Sr M Celine	1995

Q.S.M: Queen's Medal (7th highest award)



Same as QSO but usually awarded for service at a local or regional level

Awarded to:

Mary Horan – Sr M Carmel	1996
Ngoc Kim Pham – Sr M Benoit	2002
Cynthia Kearney – Sr M John Bosco	2022

M.B.E. Most Excellent Order of the British Empire



Awarded for services to charitable and welfare organisations.

Awarded to:

Bridget Moran – Sr M Athanasius	1955
Marie Wright – Sr M Gabrielle	1998

Matariki

In 2022 we celebrated Matariki for the first time as a public holiday. The calendar date for the Matariki public holiday will shift each year to align with the Maramataka (Māori lunar calendar).

Matariki is the Māori name for the Pleiades and refers to a cluster of stars that rises in mid- winter, marking the start of the Māori New Year. It is also an important time in the Pacific, which has significant associations with Matariki.

The celebration of Matariki centres around the following three themes:

- Remembrance – Honouring those we have lost since the last rising of Matariki
- Celebrating the present – Gathering together to give thanks for what we have
- Looking to the future – Looking forward to the promise of a new year



Contacts and Links

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Email office@rndm.org.nz
- ▶ Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions
<http://www.rndm.org/> This website introduces people to the world-wide life and work of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions
<http://www.rndm.org.nz> This website introduces people to the life and work of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions, Aotearoa-New Zealand and Samoa