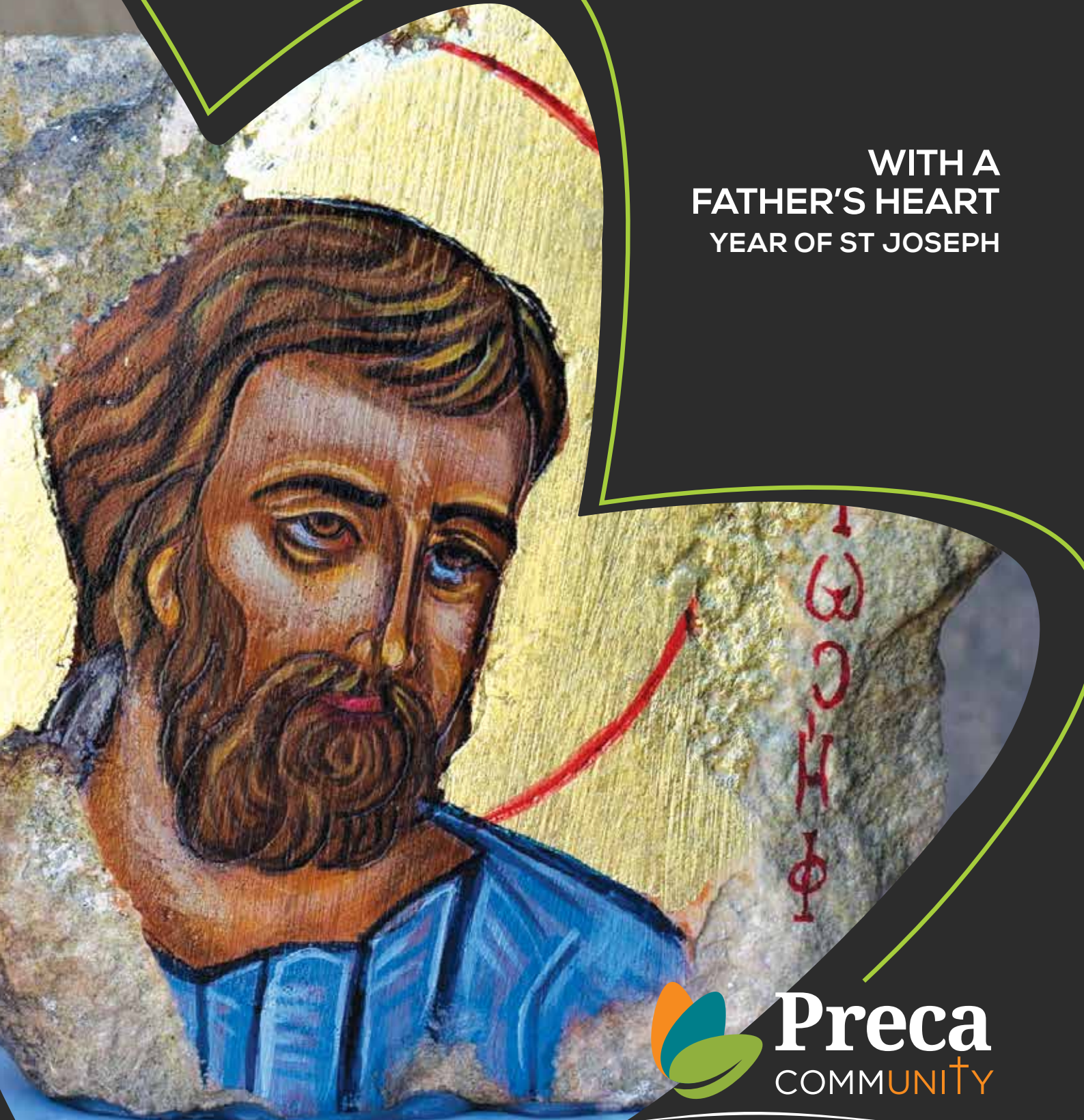


THE MUSEUM

A Magazine of the Society of Christian Doctrine - Preca Community Australia

ISSUE 24 | SEPTEMBER 2021

WITH A
FATHER'S HEART
YEAR OF ST JOSEPH



Preca
COMMUNITY



**PRECA COMMUNITY IS A SAFE ENVIRONMENT
FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS.**

SAFEGUARDING OUR FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Society of Christian Doctrine -
Preca Community values the dignity
of every person. We are especially
committed to ensuring the care,
well-being, and protection of children,
and vulnerable persons in our
faith communities.

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THE MUSEUM is issued for friends and associates of the Society of Christian Doctrine in Australia. M.U.S.E.U.M. represents the first letter of a Latin prayer, Magister Untinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus translating Divine teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel.

*A Magazine of the Society of Christian Doctrine,
founded by Saint George Preca*

Front cover: St Joseph icon written by Vincent Mangani.
Back cover: In these turbulent times we look to the Holy Family for protection.

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St John the Baptist church, Glenorchy, first meeting centre of the SDC in Hobart. Demolished in 1963. The foundation stone for the church, was laid on Tuesday 25 May 1858. (undated) source: "From Tiny Potatoes".

MISSION IN TASMANIA - SIXTY YEARS

The date, 14 April 2021 marks the 200-year anniversary of the arrival of the first Catholic priest to Tasmania, Fr Philip Conolly.

Tasmania's first officially-appointed Catholic priest was born in 1786 in County Monaghan, Ireland. Following his ordination at Maynooth, Fr Conolly undertook pastoral service there for five years before volunteering as a missionary priest for Australia.

In 1820 he arrived in Sydney with Fr John Therry, who would go on to serve the residents of New South Wales for 44 years. Their arrival marked the beginning of an officially sanctioned priest presence in Australia.

The following year, Fr Conolly left Sydney for Tasmania, arriving on 14 April, 1821. In 1824 he built a chapel dedicated to St Virgil on the land which is now the site of St Mary's Cathedral and St Mary's College, Hobart.

The early days for the Church in Tasmania were difficult.

Not unlike the early days of the Preca Community in Tasmania who formed a ministry in the state in 1961. Our *modus operandi* was misunderstood especially with daily meetings which was unheard of let alone supported. However the early Members persevered and we are grateful today for our presence in Tasmania. Much gratitude was shown to us by many families over those years.

In September 1961, our leader in Australia, together with four Preca Members, came to Hobart, Tasmania to look into the possibility of beginning our mission in Tasmania. This was at the request of the Archbishop of Hobart, Guilford Young.

The Archbishop had already requested a copy of our Rule of Life and wanted to discuss the matter further before his decision.

The group met the Archbishop and for two consecutive days drove together around the Hobart region discussing further aspects of our life. His questions were direct taking a keen interest in our mission and work particularly the life of the Member. Within two months four of us took up residency in Hobart. The first SDC centre in Tasmania was founded on 11 November, 1961 at 500 Sandy Bay Road.

We began by knocking on doors of the parishioners in Glenorchy, where we gathered around us young people who shared in the saving message that God loves us all. In November 1961, teaching began in the old, now demolished St John the Baptist church, Glenorchy - the site is now "graced" as a bottle shop!



Inside St John the Baptist church, prior to demolition. Note on a ledge on the left is the image of the "Sorrowful Mother"; a mainstay of devotion within the SDC.

Over the years the dynamics of our ministry have changed from supporting families in the early days, pre-evangelisation, and education in faith in the 1970s through to the 1990s. Today our emphasis is on supporting faith in smaller groups.

The Members in Hobart participate in sacramental formation in various parishes in the Archdiocese of Hobart, provide accommodation for university students in a safe and caring environment, and support young people, and adults who wish to engage further with their faith.

Today in Hobart we have two Members, Peter and Anthony, and one Associate, Cody. The Preca Associates are women and men, single or married, coming from all walks of life who value and commit themselves to the charisma of the Preca Community and its contribution to the Church.

Faithful to the charism of the Founder St George Preca; we commit ourselves to support the Preca ministry in making Jesus known and loved through our ministry in Hobart. Activities to acknowledge the sixty years in Hobart are being held throughout 2021 concluding with a Mass in November.

We acknowledge our 60th anniversary in 2021. This is a year to celebrate, this is a year to give thanks and this too is a year to look forward amidst challenges, and to ask ourselves to whom and how we must serve?

A recent programme on the Preca Community in Australia produced by "Shalom World" media may be found here: 'Teach the Teacher; The Preca Family; Into the Light: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tPXn4Az1Ec>



A group gathers for camaraderie and prayer Preca Centre - Forteviot, Hobart.

NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS

On the feast of the Epiphany 2017, Pope Francis approved the publication of the document bearing this title and dealing with the challenges facing the Consecrated life since Vatican II.

I chose this title as the theme for the retreat that I, a member of the Redemptorist Congregation, gave to the Society of Christian Doctrine at the Passionist Fathers' Retreat Centre in Templestowe. The meeting of three religious' groups.

I was familiar with St Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionist family. He was born in 1694 just two years ahead of my own founder St Alphonsus, but meeting Saint George Preca, the founder of the Society of Christian Doctrine was indeed an opportunity to taste New Wine. It came as a surprise to me that some of those at this retreat had been at the funeral for George Preca in 1962 and also at his canonisation by Pope Benedict in 2007.

George Preca was ahead of his time involving laity in the task of teaching the faith - the preserve of the clergy. He was so ahead of his time, that his group was banned and the Society closed down. It is, only now, in the document *New Wine in New Wine Skins*, that the Church is catching up with the pastoral vision of St George Preca. This vision is perhaps best expressed in a comment by Archbishop Guilford Young to the Members of the Society in Tasmania: **"keep doing what you are doing and wait for Canon Law to catch up."** Guilford Young was himself ahead of his time and it is not surprising that he welcomed the Society to Tasmania.

It was George Preca who actually chose the six Members to come to Australia in the 1950s and today there are some 1,200 Members serving in six countries.

We are greatly blessed to have the Society working in our parish of Holy Eucharist in St Albans. Here, they continue to reach out to those for whom the Society was founded - 'ministering to the needs of children of the poor and disadvantaged'.

George Preca's inspiration for the Society is itself a challenge to heed Pope Francis' call for us to *go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel* (Evangelii Gaudium 154).



Reflection Weekend for Preca Members held in Melbourne in July 2021 facilitated by Fr Patrick Corbett, C.Ss.R.

In 1910, one morning as Fr Preca passed the Marsa Cross, a child aged twelve was pushing a heavy cart with bags of manure and shouted: "Lend me a hand!". Fr Preca helped him and as he placed his hands on the cart, he felt a profound spiritual calmness and understood that he had experienced a revelation as the boy symbolised **Christ** and the wagon, **'the work of Evangelisation'**.

From such a humble beginning – handling a cart full of manure- one hears again Pope Francis' call for clergy not to be *'collectors of antiquities— instead being shepherds living with the smell of the sheep!'*

The Society is often referred to as the MUSEUM. However, it is far removed from a 'collectors of antiquities'- MUSEUM is an anagram for Saint George Preca's own prayer:

**Magister, Utinam Sequatur Evangelium
Universus Mundus,**

***"Divine Teacher, may the whole world
follow the Gospel".***

It was during this time of retreat with the Society, that I became aware of the delicate balance needed when a lay group adopts many aspects of the consecrated life but remains clearly lay. This is one of the challenges that Pope Francis addresses in what he has called: *New Wine in New Wineskins!* On this weekend, it was a great privilege for me to 'taste' this new wine.

At Pentecost it is recorded: *Some, however, laughed it off: They have been drinking too much new wine; Acts 2:13.* I am happy to declare: This MUSEUM is no 'laughing matter'! This really is **New Wine**. Thank you for the opportunity to share your charism.

Fr Patrick Corbett, C.Ss.R.



THE FILMSTRIP, AN INVALUABLE AID IN CATECHESIS

The Salvation Army in nineteenth century London is credited with producing the world's first moving picture film. The film, 'Soldiers of the Cross', was produced during 1900. As a teaching medium, the "Salvos" appreciated that films, either moving or frame by frame had great appeal to the enquiring mind.

Old folk who are familiar with the Society of Christian Doctrine of the mid-twentieth century still cherish many happy memories. In that era, those who received their religious formation in the Society enjoy recalling the activities in the centres, the Sunday excursions, as well as the many colourful filmstrips which meant so much to them.

The use of filmstrips in the Society of Christian Doctrine in Malta dates to more than 70 years ago.

Some Members, who were visiting Turin in Northern Italy, were immediately drawn by the filmstrips produced by the Salesians of Don Bosco. Taking the initiative, they started to import them and offer them to SDC centres.

Francis Camilleri (1908-1984), was a great promoter and was President of the 'Culture Committee' and President of the SDC. Each Monday evening, he would deliver a talk for adults at the chapel of *Tad-Dawl* (Our Lady of Light) in his home village Żebbuġ (Malta).

Much to the delight of the audience, he invariably projected a filmstrip with his animated talk.

Ignatius Azzopardi (1920-2004) of Rabat, also a member of the Culture Committee; would go from one SDC centre to another, delivering catechism lessons to children and adolescents, generally using a filmstrip to illustrate his talk.

Those who could dramatise, story tell and pay attention to detail were particularly effective.

Ignatius had a particularly melodious voice to which all the children listened attentively in perfect silence, and in the darkness all eyes were fixed on the screen.

The filmstrip, or '*filmin*', consisted of a series of slides about a particular theme. This is a forerunner of the modern "powerpoint," it made the lesson come to life. As a result, it was looked forward to and enjoyed by all. It proved also an excellent means of catechising, even to adults. A pictorial story naturally generated greater expectation and interest.

What began as an individual initiative in no time became accepted as good practice within the SDC, and more opportunities were discerned in order to publicise further the use of this new catechetical medium.

Each Wednesday, just as Members were gathering for the weekly Members' Meeting at the Mother House in Blata l-Bajda, those from various centres were encouraged to hire filmstrips for a week or two with a minimal fee of sixpence per 'film'. The small room next to the Culture Committee was used for this purpose.

On return of the filmstrip, they could hire another or buy one or more for their centre. Soon, most centres, and even individual Members were building their own filmstrip library.

When *Preca Bookshop* was set up very close to the auditorium of the Central House, it soon became a popular venue for hiring and buying filmstrips, books, and religious articles.

The filmstrips covered a wide range of subjects, from Bible stories to catechism, as well as Church teaching and liturgy, particularly sacramental liturgy, lives of the saints, and even Aesop's fables.

Children were enthusiastic about the serial stories such as that of 'Bambo', a missionary adventure in twenty episodes which was in itself an illustrated 'catechism'. 'Selim Bey', ten serialised filmstrips and 'The Black Crusader', in four filmstrips were popular stories that provided a good context for imparting religious principles and faith formation.

In summer, the 'lecture' (a common term for a talk accompanied by a filmstrip) could be projected either in the courtyard or on the roof of the centre for all the children to enjoy in the evening cool breeze.

In time, filmstrips of a purely catechetical nature became a regular feature in all classes. The liturgical seasons provided ideal visualisation material for filmstrip use and illustrated the prevailing sacred story.



Here is one of the projectors that would have been used to screen movies. This projector is on display in the ticket box at the Campbell Town Hall, Tasmania. The Salvos are credited with producing the world's first moving picture film.

The Lenten season in particular offered an opportunity for the narrative of the Lord's Passion, week by week. The young people attending eagerly awaited the dramatic and highly emotive recounting of the Passion story, even more so since this was generally done using a three-part filmstrip series.

During Sundays of Lent, the same narrative was meditatively explained in detail by the Members in evening talks for adults in the various towns and villages.

Over the years filmstrips became synonymous with the Society of Christian Doctrine. Members became ever more creative in their presentations, sometimes making use of two filmstrip/slide projectors to create a fade-in fade-out effect. Fortunately, a number of these filmstrips were eventually converted into "power-point" format which in some cases included recorded synrochronised narration.

The traditional filmstrip has served its purpose for decades as an invaluable aid in the SDC's methods in carrying out its mission in faith formation.

To a certain extent it is still utilised, albeit with modern digital technology. In this way it is easier to access and with less technical failures not uncommon was "the slide show becomes a floor show" as the slides or films became dislodged from the projectors. Looking back on the memories that the filmstrip narrative brings to mind can be an encouragement for today's catechists to look ahead with hope for the future use of good catechetical material and technology as it develops.

And in Australia

In Australia over the years, the filmstrip has proved to be a very popular resource. In the 1970s, a significant donation of filmstrips was received from the Society of St Paul, Homebush, NSW through Fr Joseph Chircop. A former Candidate in Hobart who worked for the Catholic office arranged for a significant contribution of filmstrips for the ministry in Hobart.

These donations undoubtedly set the pace for Members to embrace this medium. In particular was a series on the documents of Vatican 11 and the liturgical reforms. They were accompanied with reel-to-reel audio tapes.

These educated the members around Vatican 11 and its path for the local Church under the direction of Archbishop Sir Guilford Young. Other SDC centres in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney continued to build up their collections.

In time, we have converted a number of filmstrips into powerpoint presentations; thus not losing the momentum of this medium.

We are sure that memories abound of stories and experiences surrounding the filmstrip. We are visual learners.

**Joseph Galea
Preca Community**



Early Hobart group. This projector could illuminate a full-size theatre screen.

Valan and the Preca Community in Adelaide at the graveside of pioneer Adelaide Member, Henry Brincat.



VALAN'S STORY – OUR NEWEST ASSOCIATE

Formalised Preca Associates are women and men, single or married, coming from all walks of life who value and commit to the charisma of the Preca Community and its contribution to the Church.

Associates have the same aims as the Preca Members

“To journey as one community in holiness, in learning to make Jesus better known and loved, and in growing in the same community.”

This is Valan's Story

Childhood:

I was born in India in the state of Tamil Nadu and in a catholic village 70km from Chennai city.

I lived with my parents and six siblings. The regular Sunday catechism established my faith formation. Moreover, my parents were teachers instructing us to be of good example; of faith and discipline among other children. I still remember my catechist saying when we call ourselves “Christian” means we should live up to its values, seeing that anyone should identify us with our Joy, Love, Faith, and Patience - the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Growing to a young adult:

My high school studies gave me the first exposure to the wider community with friends also of non-christian background.

Two years in an apostolic school again strengthened my faith. I studied a diploma in Tooling Engineering in Chennai city and found a job to start my life working as a designer and drafting of mechanical components, but deep in me was the search for God's love in others found no boundaries.

That made me seek overseas travel with a work contract, I stayed in Singapore from 2000 to 2003 and I participated in the church choir after my work.



Valan in Singapore in 2002.



Preca Associates in Australia, Cody Harwood, Valan, and Joseph Martini.

Life in Australia

I arrived in Adelaide to experience life in Australia in 2004. I went back to India in 2005 where I met and married Maria; we began a family and had two children, Sahana and Christopher and kept attending regular mass on Sundays.

When I moved to the Sacred Heart parish Hindmarsh-Findon in 2013, the Sunday mass was a cheerful experience for my children where they participated in the Liturgy of the Word. One day they came home with little seedlings of strawberries they won from the fun games conducted by the Preca Members.



Valan's extended family in 2014.

PRECA

As a family, we started attending the Friday youth group regularly. One Friday in 2016 John invited me to join him in the catechism session. I liked the session and continued to attend every Friday. I observed how the Members prepare the session and teach the children in a friendly way. After a few months of listening to John's sessions, John and Franco encouraged me and guided me to instruct a group of children for the catechism session.

During this time I recalled how my parents told me "having two siblings, one as a priest and other as a nun, we must not be a hindrance to those who serve for God but we should be a moral support for them". With this inspiration, I looked for ways to help the Preca Members in my spare time through the teaching of catechism.

In the year 2020 the Members of Preca Adelaide invited me to join them as an Associate of Preca. As a family we strive to live in the guidance of St George Preca and grow in his teachings and holiness.

This is a privilege for me and my family to be involved in.

Valan Cenchetty
Preca Community Associate



Valan with his wife, Maria and children Sahana, and Christopher.

PRESERVING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF THE SDC



Eugenio Borg

Superior General Eugenio Borg who was one of the first followers of George Preca with his nephew Salvinu Azzopardi SJ at the Vatican in 1964.

During a meeting held at the General House on 4 November 2020, the Superior General, Natalino Camilleri announced that the SDC had appointed Fr Josef Sciberras OSA as the new postulator of the cause for the beatification and canonisation of Eugenio Borg, the first Superior General.

Fr Josef of the Augustinian Order, is replacing Archbishop Charles J Scicluna, who cannot continue assuming the role, following his appointment as the Archbishop of Malta.

During this meeting the Postulator Fr Josef shared a talk about the relevance of pursuing beatification and canonisation causes in the twenty first century. He also reviewed the progress of the cause of Eugenio Borg, noting that information is still being gathered at the diocesan level. Fr Josef asked us to familiarise ourselves with the life and writings of Eugenio Borg and also suggested ways in which the devotion to Eugenio Borg may be promoted with the faithful.

Eucharistic festival in Australia

These are very interesting photos indeed.

In 1931 the Annual Eucharistic Festival began and ran uninterrupted for 50 years on the historical estate of Sir Rupert Clarke and at this time it had become known as Rupertswood Salesian College Sunbury, Victoria. The SDC attended yearly from around the early 1960s, with boys, and girls attending in plentiful numbers.

Although many years earlier, and perhaps a different attitude was filtering through the SDC, we were faced with a dilemma. In 1913, before the SDC was officially recognised, some of the Members decided to take part in the solemn procession of the 24th International Eucharistic Congress, which was held in Malta.

At that time, the Members were still calling themselves by the title of *Societas Papidum* (Society of the Pope's Children). The Papal Legate, Cardinal Domenico Ferrata was present and presiding at the Eucharistic Congress. Very few people knew about the little foundation, and the banner carried in procession by the "Pope's Children", naturally attracted attention and raised questions.

Fr Preca had not been part of the planning or the procession. When he learned about it, he was not at all happy with this "spectacle", and he rebuked the Members for participating. He scolded them for "going out to make a show of yourselves".

Then, after his anger had subsided, he explained to the Members that they were missionaries sent out to spread Christ's teaching. In marching with a banner in the procession, they had not only "crashed" the Eucharistic Congress, they had given the wrong impression of their mission.

Instead of being apostles, they had made a public parade of themselves for their own vainglory. He reminded them that the *Societas Papidum* was to be known by its hidden sanctity.

Although today we still maintain a low profile, this anecdote gives us some insight into the mind of George Preca and his expectations of his community who were newly formed in 1913.



PRECA ACTION – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

The AGM for the Preca Community in Australia was held at Aquinas College, North Adelaide in January 2021.



Members Arthur Kilpatrick, Peter Judge and Associate Cody Harwood at Mary MacKillop Place, Kensington, Adelaide during AGM 2021.



Jubilarians Raymond De Bono, Mario Farrugia, John Grima, and Joseph Micallef celebrate at AGM 2021 held in Adelaide.



During the AGM 2021 held in Adelaide, a visit was made to Mary MacKillop Place, Kensington, Adelaide. Mary Hemmings leads the tour.



Music ministry at AGM 2021, Noel, Raymond, Joseph, and Michael.



Delegate John Micallef and new Associate Valan Cenchetty cut the congratulatory cake.



AGM 2021 dinner Ana and husband Joseph Martini, Associate, and Preca Member, Gaetan Callus.

Feast of St George Preca



Samoan choir sing at St George Preca Mass, Preca Centre, St Albans.



Fr Laurie Cauchi presides at Mass of St George Preca, at Preca Centre, Carss Park.



Bishop Charles Gauci of Darwin blesses couples celebrating wedding anniversaries during George Preca Mass in Adelaide.

Annual Reflection Weekend



During the Retreat, the facilitator Fr Patrick Corbett asked us to reflect on the Pool of Siloam, the site where Jesus healed a blind man: "What is it that I come to the pool for? What is it that I am cleansed of? What is it that I leave behind?"

General



Young people gathered at Preca Centre - Forteviot, Hobart



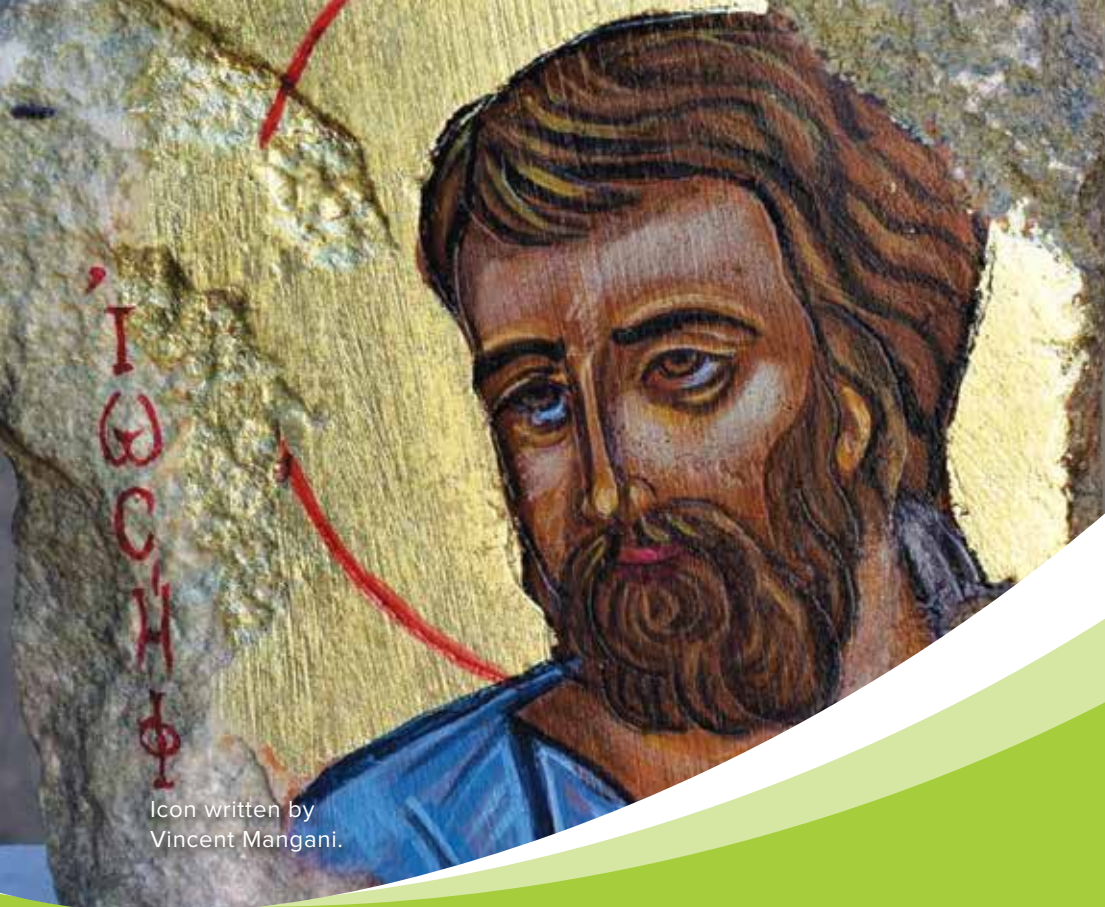
Preca group Darwin under the direction of Bishop Charles Gauci.



International Focus: Spotted in Hamrun, Malta! A mural of St George Preca. Mural by Justin Bonnici.



Long-term student residents of Preca Centre – Forteviot, Hobart, Jean Jose Varghese who moved to Darwin for work and Jeffin Jones who recently married Surumy Wilson in Brisbane.



Icon written by
Vincent Mangani.

WITH A FATHER'S HEART – YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

In this International Year of St Joseph, how does St Joseph's life, story and relationship with Jesus; harmonise, challenge and inspire our life?

Drawing from Pope Francis' letter *Petris Corde* (With a Father's Heart), written for the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of St Joseph as the patron of the Universal Church, we view Joseph – co-operating and accepting being a tender and loving father; creatively courageous; and a working father; father in the shadows.

During the Second Vatican Council, the name of St Joseph was included in the canon of the Mass following the Blessed Virgin Mary. This decision of Pope John XXIII was announced on 13 November 1961.

St Joseph is the Patron: of the Universal Church, unborn children, fathers, workers, travellers, immigrants, a happy death, Belgium, Canada, Carpenters, China, Peru, Russia, Social Justice, Vietnam and is invoked for a happy death.

When he founded the SDC, Fr George Preca placed St Joseph as the patron of temporal resources. The reason he gives for this is simple: in his life St Joseph catered for all the needs of the Holy Family; he is now still caring for those who call upon him.

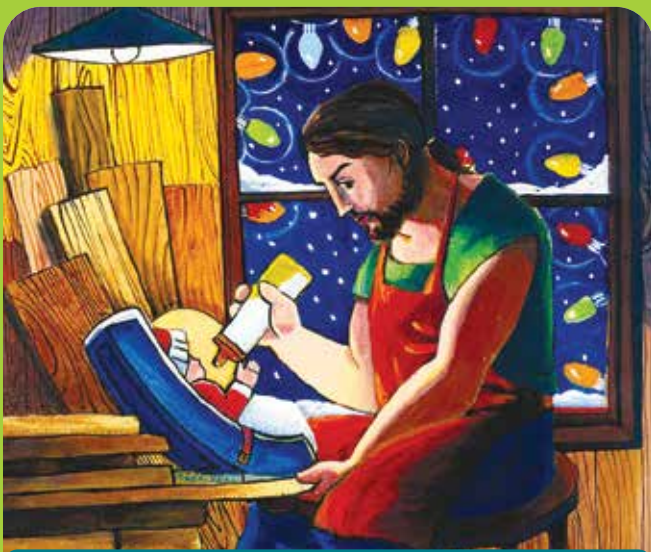
St George Preca also attributes his recovery from a lung condition to St Joseph. It was felt that he would not make it to his ceremony. On 22 December 1906, against all medical predictions and expectations, he somehow emerged from his sick bed and made his way to the Co-cathedral in time for the ordinations. He always claimed that it was St Joseph who intervened and to whom he owed this unexpected recovery.

When Fr George was going through difficult times in the early years of the SDC, he found great comfort on the feast of St Joseph, 19 March 1917. He used to say that at the time in his dreams he had seen St Vincent Ferrer twice and was assured by this Dominican saint that the Lord was with him and therefore there was no need to be anxious.

When Fr George designed the prayer manual for the Members, he wanted all to invoke St Joseph as soon as we awake by invoking his name with that of Jesus and Mary.

He also chose Wednesday for the Members to prayerfully focus on St Joseph.

There is a tribute to St Joseph in the liturgies of the Preca Community. Fr George had drawn up a prayer service which is to be held on 19 March. Part of the liturgy prayer contains a list of statements about St Joseph. This liturgy practice is still carried out today by the Members, albeit in a shortened form.



Artwork by Mickey McGrath.



Many churches have statues of St Joseph and this year we have seen a surge in temporary displays dedicated to St Joseph. This display was set up at Sacred Heart church Sandgate, Brisbane.

Trinitarian Prayer

St Joseph Prayer

TO THE FATHER: Heavenly Father, St Joseph set aside his own plans to embrace your dream for us. You invited his help in caring for Jesus your Son, our Saviour, and the revealer of your wonderful love. Enable us to live by your loving plan and to reflect to the world the light of Christ.

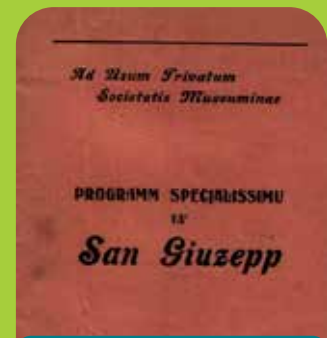
St Joseph, man of dreams and trusting steward, pray for us.

TO THE SON: Lord Jesus, You grew in wisdom and maturity as you lived in the holy family of Nazareth in daily communion with St Joseph and Mary your mother. From St Joseph you learned the dignity of human work. Give parents the wisdom to support their children and to guide them in the way and work of your Kingdom.

St Joseph, faithful parent and diligent worker, pray for us.

TO THE HOLY SPIRIT: Creator Spirit, We see in St Joseph a tenderness and reverence for all your creation. We learn from him to approach others justly and tenderly, and to see our world as endowed with the glory of God. Teach us to love one another and to be of humble service to all of creation, empowered by your life within us.

St Joseph, wise protector and humble servant, pray for us.



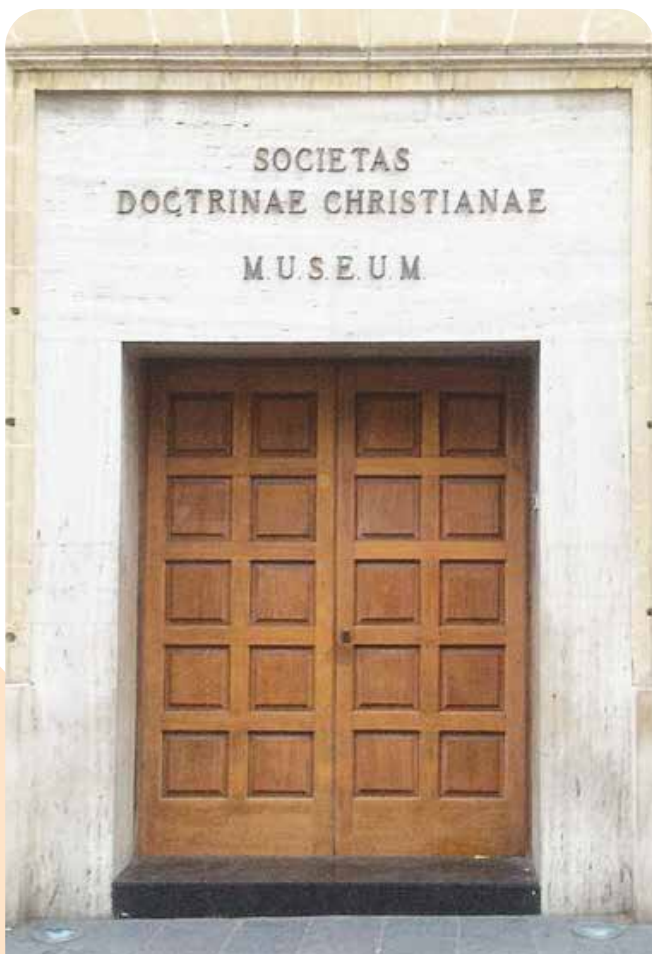
The cover of the 'Special Programme' designed by George Preca for the SDC.

WHAT'S BEHIND A DOOR?

What does it mean to have a door closed on us? For those who have experienced this; it is a daunting situation, not very pleasant at all.

Some renditions of "CLOSE EVERY DOOR TO ME" from the musical 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' are very moving, but in the song there is an underlying sadness. Set in Egypt it is the penultimate song of the first act of the musical, sung by Joseph while imprisoned for his supposed relationship with Potiphar's wife.

Joseph, his father's favourite son, is a boy blessed with prophetic dreams. When he is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and taken to Egypt, Joseph endures a series of adventures in which his spirit and humanity are continually challenged.



Entrance to General House of the Preca Community in Malta. The SDC centres welcome everyone.

I recall a Member of our Society who vividly portrayed to us that behind every door you imagine that there is a surprise. When he prepares for an activity; setting up the room, trialling the media equipment etc, he closes the door and enters again as if he is a visitor. Rather odd really but this is his way of preparing for a function.

Our centres always have open doors; in fact everyone is encouraged to enter without knocking or ringing the bell. We never turn anyone away; we make a concerted effort to welcome all. This is the Church we believe in.

In Australia; church attendances are below 10% and dropping; catholic funerals have decreased by 50%. There is a staggering amount, about 95% of young people who have nothing further to do with the Church. Statistics readily confirm this.

In our ministry, we see many doors open but many more closed. It is a ministry of perseverance. We experience sadness when the sacramental children following their complete initiation into the Church very rarely enter the church again.

It has been said it takes three generations to become fully immersed in the life of the Church and one generation to exit.

We invite these children and their families to continue in their sacramental journey through the faith formation activities that are offered in our centres. In Australia we have tried to experiment by integrating parents into the Preca ministry. In the spirit of George Preca and as mandated by our 2014 General Chapter, we are empowering parents to run faith formation groups. Adults who each week help with leading faith formation classes are referred to as 'Companions in Mission'. In Adelaide, this approach has specifically taken roots.

While in the infancy stages, we hope that the door is not closed on the young people who following their initiation into the Church community are not left behind. Somehow, we must open the door of the heart of Jesus. Children do not always notice; perhaps we need to help them tap into this realm. This is our mandate.



The door of a proud family who show their allegiance to the Church displaying an image of St George Preca on their front door.

To return to 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat', while imprisoned, Joseph discovers his capacity to interpret dreams, and he soon finds himself before the Pharaoh. He becomes the Pharaoh's right-hand man and is eventually reunited with his family.

To continue with the musical theme the Australian group The Seekers sing a beautiful and meaningful song titled 'Keep a Dream in Your Pocket.' May we find comfort in these sentiments.

Keep a dream in your pocket and a song in your heart;

Keep the lamp of your learnin' burnin' bright.

Keep your eye on your horizon and a smile on your face

As you travel down the highway of your life.

Don't listen to those voices that say it can't be done;

They build walls where there was never one before.

Words by Bruce Woodley

May we find excitement and energy in asking: what's behind a door?

**Peter L Judge
Preca Community**

What's behind a door?
Come and See!



Janelle enters the Preca Centre - Forteviot door in Hobart.

AS AN ADJUNCT TO THE ARTICLE ON WHAT'S BEHIND A DOOR?, THIS ARTICLE DISCUSSES FAMILY MINISTRIES IN BROADER DETAIL:

Family Ministries

Many years ago, we trialled a form of family-based catechesis in the sacramental programme in the Elizabeth South Catholic parish, South Australia.

This was a team effort using facilitators from the parish, the SDC and staff from the parish primary school. Prior to this the sacramental programme had been based in the catholic school and in evening classes for government school students. The family-based programme was an amazing and exhilarating experience. We made deep and lasting friendships with families and with other team members. Parents and whole families entered the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) process and came into the Church. Young people and parents started to take on roles in the worshipping community and in organising events, and newly initiated candidates looked forward to coming to Preca meetings as the natural continuation of their Christian journey – faith education beyond and complementing their school experience.

Times moved on, and following a sudden and major turnover in both the school and parish staff and administration, the processes changed and so did the outcomes.

Some years later, we were involved with something similar on a much smaller scale in another parish, and the outcomes were also similar, with conversion experiences and the connecting of families with the worshipping community and inclusion in the ongoing ministries and life of the Church.

Even though in Malta where we were founded, the traditional catechesis was age and gender based, the Preca Community is always tuned to family-based ministry. This is for two reasons. First because it arises from a village culture, where everyone knows everyone and catechists (Members of Preca) and families meet and greet at church, at work, in the shops, in the street and at family and community celebrations. And secondly, unless they are out on mission, Members

live at home with their families, among parents, uncles, aunties, godchildren, nieces and nephews, who support them and actually participate in their ministry by cooking, cleaning, washing their clothes, providing accommodation and just being there for them, while the Members provide a haven and a listening ear to all the family issues.

Further changes are – cultures shifting, family structures, and villages become suburbs of cities, local connections fragment, families become nuclear and disjointed, and religious participation becomes secondary to the breathless busyness of the commuting two-income-one-child-many-activities family situation.

In this environment, catechists can become education workers and teaching machines, no longer immersed in the healthy relationships of family and community – healthy because God is internally a relationship of love, and now unhealthy, because God is not simply a generator of catechetical prose to be handed on.

For us it means rethinking ministry and mission for this time. The post-Christian urban consumer culture that now envelops Australia and much of the western world has reached Malta and will make inroads very quickly into cultures that still for us have a sense of being 'traditional', such as in Africa, Eastern Europe or Latin America. However, no matter what direction our cultures take, at the core of all catechesis in the Preca Community we find family. This is not simply the object of catechetical activity. Members and all who engage with proclaiming the Gospel need a place of respite and a sense of belonging.

So what does this mean in practical terms?

It really means looking at different models for regular SDC activities and external programmes such as sacrament preparation which may differ depending on local circumstances and resources. This must always take into account the nurturing of the spiritual life and gifts of the local Members,



Young people journeying in Adelaide seek further integration into their faith.



Family groups in Adelaide.

so that their strength is in Christ. The targets and the content of the catechesis must be aimed so that it is in accordance with our mission statement from St Paul to Timothy: “what you have heard from me through many witnesses; pass on to faithful people who in turn will be able to teach others” and in our primary desire... *“Lord may the whole world follow your Gospel”*. In summary, our catechesis must be centred on mission, being the formation and sending out of catechists into the wider community and must avoid being condensed into simply the taking of classes, or reduced to a single parish ministry.

Primary to all of the practical activities required by our mission is the creation of basic Christian communities – no longer a village connected by streets, but a networked community connected by shared opportunities to meet together regularly where we can play sport, eat and drink, talk and share news, joy and grief, celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, also to pray or hear the Gospel, and to have special occasions for both adults and children and to get together for wonderful shared experiences and celebrations, just like in the villages of old. The Preca Community in South Australia of which I am part is one such community and I am always grateful for the bonds we share and the relationships that keep us focussed on our ministry and mission to make Jesus known and loved.

In this context, I think it means moving general age and gender-based catechesis out of the Centres into the community, matching community expectations of co-education for the younger age groups and somehow engaging the whole family. Our Centres become places of respite, contemplation and formation for mission, places where we find a supportive community, and also if possible, for deeper formation for those young people and adults who desire to participate in the mission according to their abilities.

I think it also means placing much more emphasis on scripture, whether it be on-line daily readings of the mass, coming together for adult Lectio Divina, children’s Liturgy of the Word at Sunday mass, and even simple activities such as children’s home activities such as crosswords and word searches, and competitions for learning scripture phrases.

And finally, to conclude I think it means reimagining sacramental programmes as family-based catechesis in small home groups, something like an RCIA-style sacramental process. This is because as time goes on it is more and more likely that parents either have a naive understanding of faith that cannot engage with the issues of modern life, or because parents are not yet evangelised or even baptised. It is also because there is a need to create a networked community that will support the flame of awakening faith. This means intergenerational catechesis, where children will be supported in their process by adults who are also being supported in their process, by the catechist and by each other. It requires primary educational sessions to be in more about facilitation rather than didactic catechesis, so it can be intergenerational (i.e. all the family together), with most of the learning process happening between sessions, along with supportive prayer and scripture.

Our late Superior General Victor Delicata often repeated the mantra **“Relation, Relation, Relation!”**

I believe that these three prophetic words need to be etched into our hearts if we are to tap into the Incarnational and Trinitarian core of our spirituality and really engage with the world. Only out of a supportive relationship will the Gospel be able to be preached and only in relationship will it be truly heard.

Joseph Kielnerowski
Preca Community

FEAST OF THE VIRTUES - A REFLECTION ON ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND POVERTY

St George Preca often read the biographies, and writings of saints. One in particular that appealed to his imagination was that of the Dominican, St Vincent Ferrer. It was in reading the Treatise on the Spiritual Life where St Vincent Ferrer considers, “the life of those destined to preach the gospel, the virtues which become them, their poverty, simplicity, humility, meekness, the charity which should bind them together, considering that they ought to see nothing, speak of nothing, desire nothing but Jesus Christ only, and him crucified.”

These virtues prompted St George Preca to design resolutions that the Preca Members profess regularly. The protector saint for poverty and a reflection on the first virtue poverty is provided here.

St Francis of Assisi (Francesco), originally named Giovanni, was born in Assisi in central Italy in 1181. His family were wealthy and made their money trading cloth, and Francis was expected to take on the business. Francis was brought up in relative luxury and loved physical sports such as wrestling, archery, and horsemanship. His friends were “party animals”, and he was a wild boy. In later life he would say “I lived in sin back then”.

He was bored at home, and dreamed of fame and honour. He joined in a militia going off to fight the neighbouring town of Perugia and was captured, spending a year in captivity until his family paid the ransom. This experience both traumatised and sensitised him.

When he returned home, he saw a leper and instead of ignoring him as he would have done previously, he was filled with compassion and embraced and kissed him. He said that this filled him with an “indescribable sweetness and joy”.

He was now in his mid-twenties. One day at mass, Francis heard the gospel passage in which Jesus sends his disciples on mission with the words: “Do not take any gold or silver or copper in your purse, with no pack for the journey or any extra shirt or sandals or a staff.” Francis took this as his rule. He vowed to live a life of poverty and to help the poor.

He had heard Jesus speak from the cross in the ruined church of San Damiano: “rebuild my Church”. But he had no money. So he sold some of his family’s cloth and a horse. This got him hauled before the local bishop and he removed his clothes, and gave them and the money to his father. Now he was truly poor. His friends thought he was crazy, but instead of persuading him they became affected by his spirit and joined him; abandoning their possessions and comforts to live in caves and huts.

They preached the love and forgiveness of God, two more of the virtues in the resolutions that the Preca Members profess frequently. They had nothing, yet were immensely happy. Even the birds would come to them and listen. They, and all nature, were Francis’ brothers and sisters, not ‘sowing or reaping or gathering into barns’, as perfect examples of poverty and humility.

One story relates how some thieves stole food and drink from Francis’ community. He prayed for them and sent one of the brothers to them with bread and wine. They were so overcome that they joined the community and spent their lives in giving instead of taking.

Francis died at the age of 44, of malaria and other illnesses, contracted while caring for his poor.

For Preca Members, the spirit of poverty lived by St Francis is of two forms. The first form is to live personal poverty, for two reasons, one being because death could come suddenly, and catch us unaware. The other reason is for mission, as St Francis heard at mass that day, without gold or silver to hold us back. The other form of poverty is to have a fundamental option for the poor. Preaching to the wealthy is like throwing pearls to pigs. They do not care. The poor know life and are open to the Gospel - they are able to experience the love of God through others. That is, if we practice poverty, like St Francis did, and preach to the poor - being those in need and open to listening - like St Francis did, Christ will act through us and bless us.

Gospel Reflection:

Mark 6: 7-13, Jesus sent out the apostles in pairs and instructed them to take nothing for the journey.

Matthew 16:13-20, focuses on Peter as the basis for the Church. While Francis never looked for power, it was important to him that Pope Innocent III gave approval for this life of poverty and service that he and his brothers wanted to live.

Matthew 10:37-42, indicates that the life of a disciple requires self-sacrifice but there are rewards. Francis and Clare were both born into wealthy families. They chose and lived in evangelical poverty which made them free to embrace others for who they were.

Are we ready to give the best of ourselves today?

“A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself.” - Catechism par. 1803



St Francis statue in Cinque Terre, Italy by Gianfranco Negri.



Icon written by Vincent Mangani.

Returned to God 2021

We hold them in prayer:

22.10.20 JUNE ADELINE NICHOL

17.01.21 PHILIP WILSON

20.01.21 ISIDORE ANANTHARAJ

13.02.21 ROBERT BARBER

06.06.21 VERNON BROWNE

19.07.21 CARMEN JONES

Disclaimer - While we make every endeavour to include those who have died and have been connected with the SDC, we apologise if we have missed someone.



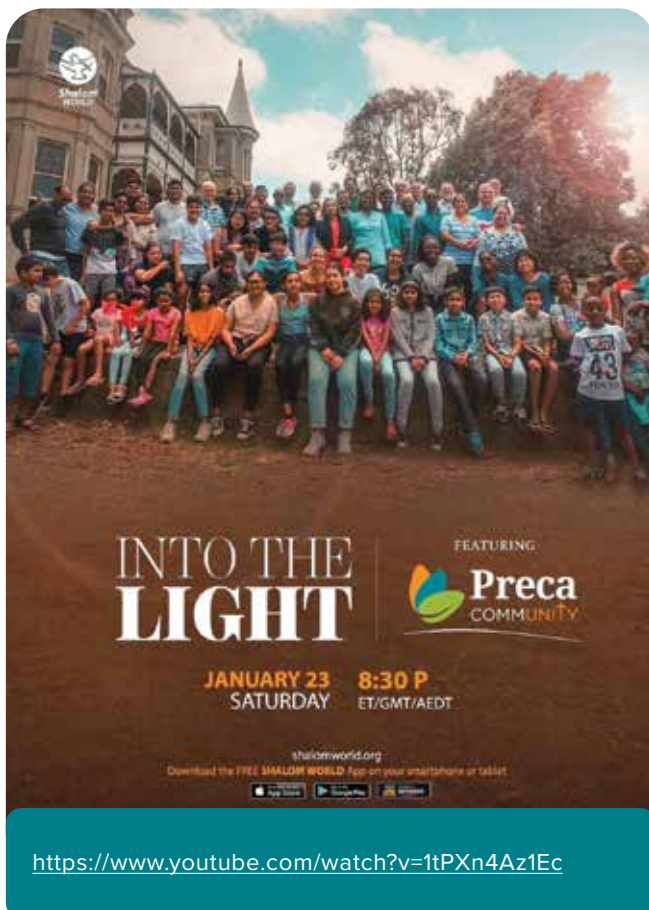
Archbishop Philip Wilson, RIP celebrates his birthday with the Preca Community in Adelaide in October 2016.

NEWS IN 2021 INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL

Teach the Teacher. The Preca Family. Into the Light

Learning never ends... Open yourself to new ideas and thoughts to grow more each day. The Preca Family, a community who aims to learn and journey into holiness so as to inspire others to be holy while loving and knowing Jesus - builds together a community that learns and teaches each other.

View this video on the Preca Community in Australia – 24 minutes. Produced by Shalom World.



Incorporation of Members

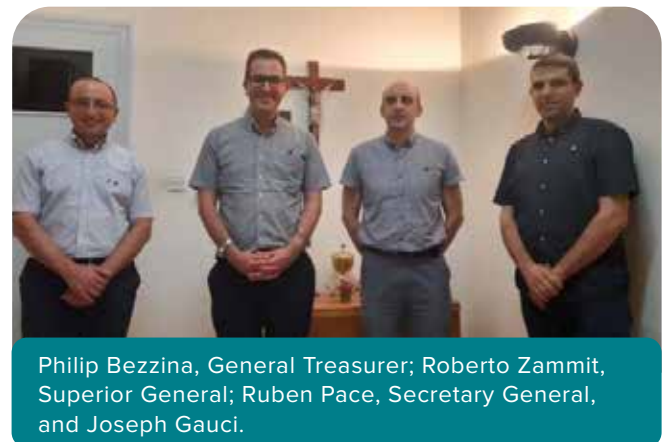
Darlene Gauci was incorporated into the SDC on 29 August 2021 in Malta.

Jack Opato, from the Ruiru centre, Kenya was incorporated on 10 July 2021.

General Chapter 2021

The SDC held its 6th General Chapter from 2 to 8 August 2021.

The Chapter elected Roberto Zammit as the fifth Superior General of the SDC and Philip Bezzina, Joseph Gauci, and Ruben Pace as members of the General Executive Council.



Philip Bezzina, General Treasurer; Roberto Zammit, Superior General; Ruben Pace, Secretary General, and Joseph Gauci.

Pledge Before the Lord

I sincerely approve of every good deed that has been done and will be done until the end of the world.

I sincerely disapprove of every immoral deed that has been done and will be done until the end of the world.

I sincerely forgive all my enemies.

I intend to do all things from a motive of faith without which no-one can please God. Amen.

Attributed to St George Preca

PRECA ACTION – SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE (CONTINUED)

Making Connections with Families



Birthday celebrations at Preca Centre, St Albans.



Family Weekend for the Preca Community in Adelaide held in July 2021.



Family gatherings at Preca Centre, St Albans.



Joe, Julia and Marianne at Family Weekend.



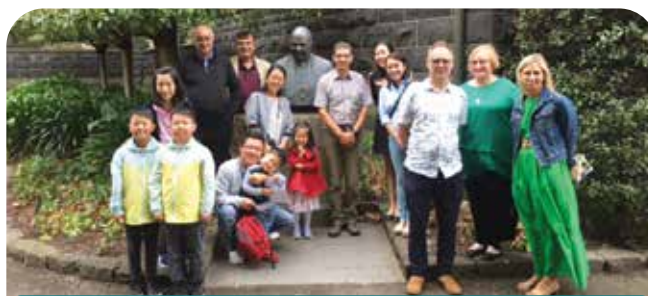
Family gatherings at Preca Centre, St Albans.



Breakfast of champions! Loyola, Robert and Valan at Family Weekend.



Preca Community, St Albans.



Preca Community from Altona Meadows gathered at St George Preca statue in the grounds of St Patrick's cathedral, Melbourne.

