



Giving Thanks for 130 Years

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Submitted by Anne Rennie, Companion in Mission

It was with great joy that the [Genazzano FCJ College](#) community celebrated its 130th anniversary Mass at [St. Patrick's Cathedral](#) on February 21st this year. Celebrant Father Brendan Reed, the college chaplain, led the large congregation in a Eucharistic thanksgiving for the contribution Genazzano has made to Catholic education in Melbourne over the years since its founding in 1889.

The college motto for this year is *Gifted with Companionship and Hope*. At the beginning of the mass a student from each year level walked up the nave carrying a gift to be placed beside the altar, symbolic of all the gifts given to the students and their responsibility to share these gifts with others in the community. The notion of companionship is integral to the charism of the Venerable [Marie Madeleine d'Houët](#) and the fabric of the school, the word having strong ties to the FCJ Sisters themselves and the way students are taught to companion others in all walks of life. Hope is central to the Christian faith. We believe in the life to come and while here we live in hope, acting with energy and enthusiasm and believing our efforts make a difference to the lives of others.

The cathedral was full of colour as the new house banners were on display on the sandstone pillars and all girls were immaculately attired – socks up, ribbons in hair, badges in place, smiling and suitably reverent. Students, staff, FCJ sisters, alumnae, families and friends all gathered to celebrate what Genazzano has meant and means today. The Sisters, in pride of place at the front of the cathedral, were especially touched to be given a Genazzano rose and the acknowledgement of all the work, some known, much unsung, they have undertaken in their various ministries over the years.



Many of the sisters had taught at Genazzano at some time in their careers in education. Sister Joan fcJ (formerly Sister Eymard) was a great sportswoman and I remember especially how she encouraged netball and softball in my Year 8 – almost fifty years ago! Sister Helen fcJ was a former Deputy Principal of the college who had boarded at Genazzano as a student. Seeing these wonderful women humbly and gratefully receive this little token of affection summed up that gift of gentleness so renowned by

the foundress; *la doceur* – gentleness. What wonderful role models of faith and grace and the “feminine genius” referred to by Pope John Paul II who honoured the profound and unique gifts that women can give to the world. Certainly, our FCJ sisters embody this as they do all sorts of apostolic work for the improvement of the lives of others and the spreading of the Good News.



All involved in this celebratory Eucharist understood its importance as a gathering of the Genazzano family and faith community. It was an acknowledgment of just how important education in faith and life is and how it can be rich and resplendent in the generations who sow what they reap in their good intentions and consequent actions. The very young and the wise elders were all in companionship in the cathedral gathered under the Genazzano motto, *Fidelis*. This motto reminds us that we are faithful to God, to each other and to ourselves. Our final fitting hymn was *Companions on the Journey*. Its final verse sums up how the Genazzano community has been nurtured and nourished over the past 130 years.

*We have been gifted with each other,
And we are called by the Word of the Lord;
To act with justice, to love tenderly,
And to walk humbly with our God.*

This is the example that the Sisters FCJ have set for us. We have much good work to do as we follow in their footsteps, the next generation of companions building the next 130 years of Genazzano, “the well-loved school upon the hill”.



“ Our little Society has for its end to glorify the heart of Jesus by every means in its power. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Faithful Companions of Jesus

