



Asia – Australia History

Our FCJ History in Asia-Australia

In the spirit and desire of our Foundress and in our own living heritage are found the vision and the hope of Faithful Companions of Jesus. (FCJ Constitutions)

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In Australia

The first group of FCJ sisters arrived in Australia on 1st June, 1882. Twelve sisters, from Ireland and England, disembarked from the *SS Liguria* at Sandridge (Port Melbourne) after a voyage from England lasting six weeks. They were missioned in response to the urgent appeal of bishops and priests in Australia for help with the education of Catholic children.

VAUCLUSE, RICHMOND

The sisters began teaching in St Ignatius' Girls' School, Richmond, less than a fortnight after their arrival, and by the early autumn, they had set up the Convent School, Mount St Joseph's. Between 1884 and 1888, three further groups of FCJs from Europe followed the original community of twelve and increased their numbers to thirty four.



GENAZZANO, KEW

A property in Kew was purchased in 1888 and Genazzano Convent School was started in a house leased by the sisters. Two years later the school moved into a brand new building. [Genazzano FCJ College](#) is still flourishing with over a thousand students.



Three images of Genazzano: Range View, the first house; newly built Genazzano, and Genazzano today

COUNTRY VICTORIA

On 14 August, 1900, the FCJ sisters arrived at Benalla, and set up a girls' secondary school, Our Lady of the Angels. In 1960 boys were accepted into the school and it was later called [FCJ College Benalla](#). Presently there are over four hundred and fifty students in this ever-expanding school.

In each place where the sisters settled the pattern of development was to begin simply, and gradually increase the outreach as the foundation prospered. An FCJ centre normally included one or more parish schools, boarding and day schools, parish pastoral work and many forms of religious education.



Our Lady of the Angels, Benalla

THE PENINSULA

In 1968, the sisters established "Stella Maris", a school for girls at Frankston. This school merged with the Marianist College for boys in 1979 to form John Paul College. Some of the sisters taught in primary schools in the vicinity: St Anne's, Seaford and St John's, East Frankston. Others involved themselves in the parish of St Francis Xavier, Frankston. The sisters left Frankston at the end of 1996.

In Langwarrin in 1975 a Frontier Group of five sisters were contracted to work for five years with the priest and the local community. Their mission was to establish a primary school and to be involved in parish ministry.

The FCJ sisters taught in and administered many parish primary schools across Victoria, some for a few years and others for many years, including St Joseph's Benalla (88 years); St Ignatius, Richmond (100 years); Our Lady of Good Counsel, Deepdene (57 years); Sacred Heart, Kew (85 years).

FURTHER AFIELD IN AUSTRALIA

The FCJ sisters engaged in ministry in the Kimberley from 1987 to 1995. They worked at Notre Dame University and with the Catholic Education Office, moving throughout the Kimberley as consultants as well as participating in local parish activities. Other individual ministries took sisters to Sydney and Adelaide where they responded to community needs.



AUSTRALIANS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND IN COUNTRIES WITH EMERGING ECONOMIES

Since 1986 a number of Australian FCJ sisters have joined sisters of many nationalities in establishing new foundations in developing countries and in countries with emerging economies “being ready to be sent anywhere for the Kingdom of God”. They spent many years in Sierra Leone, Bolivia, Argentina, the Philippines, Indonesia and Romania.



The FCJ sisters continue to minister to others. Through their presence in parishes, some sisters are involved in pastoral work; others are engaged in social welfare, the support of people with disabilities and care of the elderly. Some sisters minister in schools, some in chaplaincies and others give retreats and spiritual direction. A number of FCJ sisters actively work against human trafficking and others give support to refugees. The sisters respond wherever they can, in the spirit of Marie Madeleine d’Houet, seeking to meet the needs of the time.

ASIA

Extensive research was undertaken on where to establish the first FCJ foundations in Asia which included China, South Korea, Japan and India. The decision was made to begin in Indonesia and the Philippines.

In Indonesia

The first Faithful Companion of Jesus arrived in Yogyakarta, Central Java on December 16th 1987. Ten months later a second FCJ joined her and the first FCJ community was established in a small rented house just before Christmas 1988. The sisters taught English and engaged in pastoral work in Sanata Dharma University which is run by the Jesuits.

On 29th September 1991 two Indonesian postulants were accepted. Further postulants and novices have entered the Society in subsequent years. The sisters moved into their newly built house in August 1992. Since then a number of FCJ sisters from around the Society have been missioned to Indonesia. A second house was opened in Yogyakarta in September 1998 and on November 1st 2005, a new community was established in Ende, Flores.



Sr Barbara, at Sanata Dharma University. Sisters Afra and Agnes on the eve of their first profession, with Sr. Paula Terroni, general superior

There were FCJ communities in Kupang, West Timor (1993 – 1997) and Purwokerto (2002 – 2005). The sisters who lived in Kupang taught in the Catholic University and in the Major Seminary and those in Purwokerto were engaged in parish work.



The FCJ community at Flores, Ende.

A milestone for the FCJ ministry in Yogyakarta was the completion and [opening of Sarasvita](#) in October 2017. The word Sarasvita, living water, comes from Sanskrit. Situated adjacent to Soropadan community house, the [Sarasvita Centre for Spirituality and Human Development](#) is a centre for spiritual direction and counselling, for retreats and conferences; it is a place for nurturing spiritual and human development.



The sisters missioned to Indonesia have engaged in a diversity of ministries including: teaching, nursing, promoting natural family planning, parish work, pastoral and social work, counselling and therapy, spiritual direction, retreat giving, ministry to

women and young people, inter-faith dialogue and development work.

In the Philippines

In 1988, six FCJ sisters went to the Philippines. Two communities were established; one in Naga (a rural area in Zamboanga Del Sur on the island of Mindanao), and one in Quezon City (which is part of Metro Manila, the National Capital Region).

In Naga, the sisters made social and human development in the context of faith their explicit focus: they worked with young people, initiated an ecology project and opened credit unions and cooperatives. They also offered their support in the local Church and took on various other educational, social, pastoral and spiritual ministries. The FCJ ministry in Naga was deeply appreciated by the local people, who sadly said goodbye to the sisters when, due to security concerns and the feeling that the Society had given the people a good enough start for them to be able to continue on their own, the sisters left in 2000 to start another house in Maasin, Southern Leyte, another Cebuano-speaking region of the Philippines. Here, the sisters worked closely with the Bishop in parish and community building, in catechetics, and in work with the youth and those in prison. St. Joseph's Boys' Home for street boys was established in 2005, and when the FCJ sisters left Maasin in 2010, this was handed over to the Diocese.



In Quezon City, the first small community actively supported various educational and health care projects and eventually established the [FCJ Learning and Development Center](#), serving the people living adjacent to the Payatas dumpsite. In addition, with financial help from FCJ schools and associates in different parts of the world, they also offered annual scholarships to cover college fees for the tertiary studies of young people from the area, a practice that continues today. They also continue to provide weekend tutoring sessions for children from nearby squatter districts. The aim of our sisters working with poor people in the Philippines has always been to work alongside them, to learn from them, and to share skills and expertise with them. People are encouraged to develop their own ways to a deeper faith, to a better standard of living, and to building a more just and caring society.

The first Philippine candidates joined the Society in 1994. We are desirous to share our FCJ charism with the Filipino people. Our sisters are zealous in making our charism known by any means, particularly with young people.

The Province of Asia-Australia

In 2002, the Sisters from Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines united to form a new province of the FCJ Society – the Province of Asia-Australia. In 2009 a community in Myanmar was added to the province.



The Province of Asia-Australia Assemblies, Melbourne, 2012 and 2016.

In Myanmar

Sharing our companionship....

The first FCJ community was established in early 2009. Two FCJ sisters arrived in Yangon on 9th January and were joined by a third sister the following month. They went to Myanmar at the suggestion of the Jesuits and with the support of the local clergy. The FCJs were attracted by the potential for ministry with the Myanmar people. After years of exploration and research and many short visits to the country they were attracted by the beauty of the people, their hospitality, simplicity and gentleness, their compassion and hope.



The first community in Myanmar, 2009, and the current community, 2018.

The community lived in three different rented houses since first arriving in 2009. By 2017 the mission had developed to such an extent that it was discerned it was a good time to buy the third rented house, located in Kamayut Township, Yangon. It made a huge difference to the ministry of the FCJs to have their own building. The house quickly became a place where all people were welcome, a place of hospitality and companionship.

The 27th November 2017 was a special moment when the sisters joined the crowds welcoming Pope Francis on his visit to Myanmar.

Since arriving in Yangon the sisters have engaged in various ministries including teaching English and Indonesian in several schools and places of higher education; chaplaincy work; youth work; working to empower women; retreat giving and spiritual accompaniment.

On the 8th December, 2018 the first two Myanmar FCJs, made their first profession. This joyful occasion was held at St Augustine's Parish Church, Yangon and was well attended by FCJs, family members and friends of the community.



Vow ceremony in Myanmar, 8 December, 2018. Cecilia and Maria, the first two Myanmarese fcs, made their first profession

*Excerpts from A Vista of Years by Teresa White, fcJ, and
God's Faithful Instrument, by Patricia Grogan, fcJ,
were used on this page.*



“ When Peace and Union reign among us, God is with us. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

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