



## Josephite Journeying Retreat, Kincumber NSW



In an ideal location where, as one Retreatant discovered, “the spirit of Mary MacKillop pervades every corner of the beautiful Kincumber surroundings”, twenty-nine Sisters from New Zealand, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Lochinvar, Goulburn, Perthville, Whanganui and NSW Central Josephite Congregations gathered for the Retreat.



The weather for the whole week was perfect and the retreatants made the most of the sunshine by exploring the beautiful grounds at Kincumber and absorbing the spirit of Mary MacKillop and Julian Woods.

The retreat leaders, Sisters Lyndall Brown (NZ), Ann Morrison (Perthville) and Mary Ryan (Victoria), organised the six days around the theme of ‘Josephite Landscapes’. On the first night of the retreat all watched and listened as representatives of the different Congregations and Provinces added a leaf to the Josephite ‘Family Tree’ showing their founding date. This gave a sense of the amazing evolution of the present groups of Josephite Sisters who began at Penola S.A. in 1866.

The presenters, skillfully using power point presentation of beautiful pictures, hymns and quotes, led retreatants through the different landscapes of mountain, swampland, desert and water to tap into the Josephite story and their own inner journey. Short, poignant dramatisations of scenes in the early Josephite Story were presented to help participants appreciate the depths of spirituality in Mary, Julian and Teresa McDonald.

This gave participants a clearer understanding of all the characters involved in the early story, including the sad event of 1876, now referred to as ‘The Separation’. A highlight of the retreat, was the Pilgrimage Day, during which each retreatant, in her own time and way, visited and reflected on a number of the significant sites within the Kincumber precinct, including:

- The original wharf, where Mary MacKillop and the early Sisters landed on many occasions, after being rowed across the Brisbane Water in open boats
- The old stable, reminding of the Josephite “founding” in Penola
- The cemetery, where a number of Sisters are buried, and one tombstone lists the names of eight boys who died at Kincumber
- The early sandstone building with the verandah where Mary MacKillop spent many hours during her later years as an invalid
- The new 2009 Centenary Labyrinth, inspired by the Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth, but created from 2400 ‘dwarf mondo grass’ plants.
- The historic Holy Cross Church where Mary MacKillop often prayed, and where, to conclude the Pilgrimage Day, Bishop Bede Heather celebrated Mass with the retreatants.

One Sister summed up the Retreat experience: “I am sure that each retreatant left Kincumber greatly enriched and united in our Josephite vocation”.

Note: Due to popular demand, Josephites Journeying Retreats, which were to finish this year, will now be offered in 2012. Dates, venues and retreat teams, yet to be finalised, will be advertised in the coming months.