

## *A yeast still rising*

Cynthia Hunt, born in Snowtown to a devoutly Catholic mother and an 'Irish Freemason' father, judges the nuns who taught her at Cabra Dominican College in Adelaide as the most important role models in her long life. In an era when most girls were expected to find fulfillment in the home, Cabra girls were inspired to develop and apply their talents in the wider world. It comes as no surprise to her that many women revered in the



secular world as feminist trailblazers—such as Roma Mitchell and Germaine Greer—were educated by nuns. Cynthia chose Junior Primary Teaching, taking subjects at Adelaide Teachers College and University of Adelaide. Posted to Kimba for four years, she met Doug, baker by trade, and they have now been married for 58 years.

For close to a decade, they ran the Milang Bakery, in a double-storied building that now attracts tourists' cameras but offered only primitive living and working conditions for the young couple. She remembers digging by hand a drain outlet through hard bluestone, and mincing vegetables for pasties from 3am until late afternoon to meet an Easter rush. But hard work built a successful business. Two children were born while they were at Milang and another two in Strathalbyn. They all attended Strathalbyn schools, followed by Cabra for the girls and Sacred Heart for the boys.

An opportunity presented in Strathalbyn and Cynthia and Doug moved to larger premises, where The Bower Bird, an antique shop, now operates in High Street. They developed an enterprise that grew to include grocery deliveries and became large enough for them to retain independence when most food retailers were lost to corporate bakery chains and supermarkets. One customer reported carrying their bread on a shooting trip to Innamincka: even towards journey's end a loaf carried not a speck of mould. Cynthia is proud of their achievements and notes that parish friendships were part of a support structure that helped them as parents and business owners. Another element was an opportunity to return to her profession: sixteen years teaching at Ashbourne, Strathalbyn and Langhorne Creek. They sold the High Street business after twenty one years and started a laundromat in Mount Barker. For the next twenty six years, Doug tended that operation as he travelled to and from his job teaching baking at Bedford Industries in Adelaide.

What have been the most important values for Cynthia? She respects honesty and courtesy as virtues that help to knit us into a community and is grateful for the discipline imposed at Cabra all those years ago because it helped pupils to concentrate on the fundamentals of learning. But above all, Cynthia treasures the innocence and promise of children and in daily prayers, she has always first mentioned the plight of children suffering abuse. Even in an era when society preferred to avert its eyes, she once pleaded with a principal to intervene for a pupil who was obviously being mistreated at home.

Retirement' for someone like Cynthia is of course an illusion. She has delivered Meals on Wheels, helped with grandchildren, taken communion to the sick and elderly once a month and for ten years represented the parish at the local nursing home. She now plays bridge three times a week and loves her daily crossword. She struggled with cancer for nearly three years, at one stage running up an electricity bill of \$600 during chemotherapy when, weight down by 28 kilograms, she simply could not keep herself warm. But she is now trustful that her life will be healthy.

Trust was a key theme in a series of lectures, Life in the Spirit, given to those who attended Mass on Friday mornings, followed by tea/coffee and biscuits in the presbytery. That chapter in parish life came close to the charismatic faith stream and Cynthia senses that therein may be one answer to the challenge of calling young people back to religious worship.

When challenged with the responsibility of spending an imaginary million dollar bequest to the parish, Cynthia responded:

- Complete the new parish hall at Strathalbyn
- Using paid labour as required, establish the hall as a centre for activities that attract young people
- Fix major maintenance problems in our churches
- Invest all remaining money in building basic health, sanitation and education facilities for a Third World community. Give the children in that community a decent start in life.

Our secular society promises fulfillment from material consumption but Cynthia reminds us that what we receive from life is framed by what we have chosen to give. Those Dominican nuns encouraged Cynthia to embrace life with all her abilities and energy and that is exactly what she has done. They will be well pleased.