

“THE BEANS” and a Parable of Encouragement. 2018

When a large group of Solomon Island Sisters joined us at Gerrards Cross for General Chapter earlier in the year, many of them spent many hours of great enjoyment in the garden where much clearing up of clinging ivy and rampant growth needed to be done.

One day they dug some plots in the walled garden, which till then had been completely grass, with a huge pile of branches and ivy, bindweed, etc. in the centre of the space, growing daily to monstrous proportions, till dry enough to burn.

Some weeks later I took a photo of Mary Gladys, who is very tall, standing among the beans to show how high they were growing. Priscilla faithfully watered them every evening during the rainless weeks of summer, and I took another picture of *her*, holding the basket that contained some of the pickings. She loved the carved statue of Mary and Jesus in the refectory, and there we began to have the sweet fresh beans in our dinner every 2 or 3 days, for quite a long while.



Then of course we had those fierce gales and after a couple of days our visit to the bean plot revealed a great big tangle on the ground. Priscilla valiantly attempted to get them upright again, but most gave up the struggle and sank to the ground; they didn't stop producing beans however, though with a little less zest at that point.

As is often the case, I found myself reflecting on this little bit of wonder, and what one might still be able to offer in old age, when one's limbs begin to wobble, one's mind becomes a little tangled, and when one becomes more reliant on the support of others for basic things; even in being able to stand up.

Well !! - **What can be more special than the sense of love and joy imparted by a smile?**

My very beloved friend, a Sister now in her 90's, has a particularly glorious smile, and has practised it constantly, ever since I've

known her - over 40 years - and in the rather harassed queue at a Till one morning in the Supermarket, I recall how a complete stranger exclaimed to her, **“Your smile has made my day.”** **The more we do it, the happier we become, and it spreads - very worth while, don't you think?! Pure Treasure.**