Remembering those abroad at Christmas

This festive season, many of us will remember those away from us at this special time of year. Letters, emails, telephone calls, any form of communication, can be so important in allowing us to connect with those far from home and friends.

The arrival of the post in time for Christmas was anxiously awaited by the members of the Australian community in 1875, their first Christmas in their mission. M. Gonzaga Barry, Foundress Australia wrote to Rev. Mother Scholastica Somers, Superior General describing the opening of these much cherished communications from home. We 'made up our minds not to read our letters until next day [December 26th] lest the remembrances of all our loved ones so far away might be too much for us individually and collectively. I gave all the dear Srs their letters amounting to 74 but they gave them to the Divine Infant in the Crib'. The letters were finally opened on St Stephen's Day, 26th December. Their sorrow at being so far from home, was surely alleviated with the arrival of 'some wine and champagne', sent to the convent by the Bishop of Ballarat, 'to make us merry'!

Christmas has long been a special time of remembrance for those who are apart from their families and friends. M. Gonzaga Barry again wrote to M. Scholastica Somers on Christmas Day 1877, sending the Christmas wishes and love of each member of the Australian mission. All 'our hearts have travelled today to the old house to wish you dearest Mother a bright, joyful Christmas'. The timely arrival of the 'Christmas box' from Ireland on 24th December, 'caused such joy every one rejoiced to see the Xmas box from dear Revd. Mother.' As they unpacked the box, with surely painful and touching reminders of home and those they had left behind, they gladly remembered those from whom they were apart. 'We all felt how much we owed to the kind though that did not forget the absent ones and prayed that God might bless and reward you and all our dear Mothers and Sisters in the old house.'