



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF AUSTRALIA

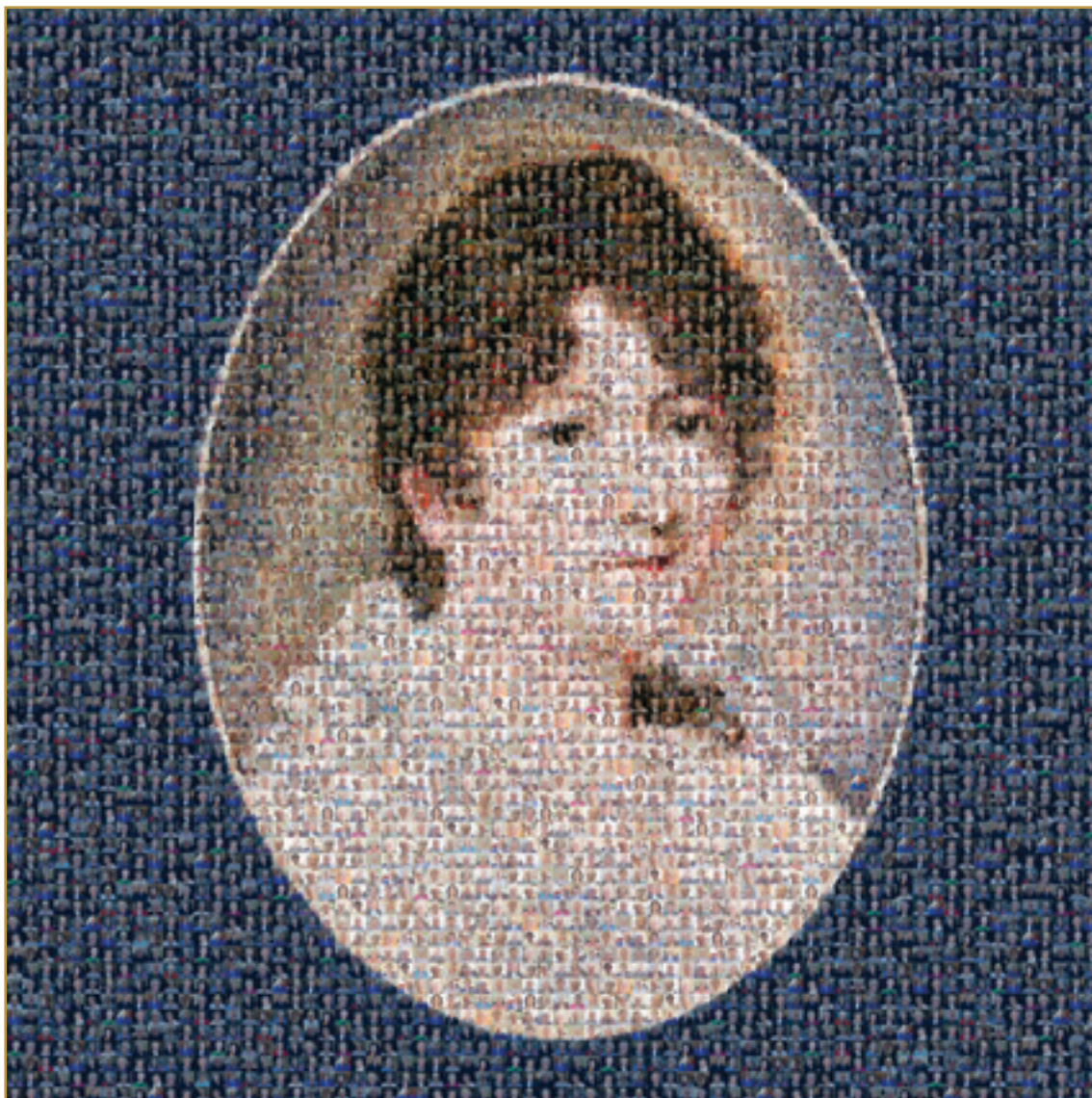
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# Celebrating 200 years

of the foundation of the Congregation  
of the Religious Sisters of Charity



The Australian Sisters who went to Ireland for the 200th Celebrations of the Founding of the Religious Sisters of Charity were overwhelmed when Sr Mary Christian, Congregational Leader of the Founding Congregation in Ireland presented this special portrait of Mary Aikenhead with every Australian Sister of Charity superimposed several times on this image to Sr Clare Nolan, Congregational Leader in Australia.

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# Celebrating 200 years

at Sacred Heart Church, Donnybrook

## Welcome by Sr Mary Christian

The 15th August, the solemnity of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was chosen by Mary Aikenhead as the Patronal Feast of our Congregation. A very Happy Feast Day to all and indeed it is a little overwhelming to see so many people who have come to support us today. Thank you for joining with us to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of our Congregation in the year when, on 18th March, Pope Francis declared Mary Aikenhead Venerable.

I welcome especially our celebrant and homilist, the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, His Excellency Archbishop Brown. Accompanying His Excellency on the altar, are, on my left, Monsignor Ciaran O'Carroll, Rector of the Irish College in Rome and the postulator for the cause of Mary Aikenhead. And beside him, the Parish Priest of this Parish of Donnybrook, Monsignor Lorcan O'Brien. On my right is Monsignor Dermot Lane, the Parish Priest of Balally and Fr Ivan Tonge, the Parish Priest of Ringsend. The beautiful vestments worn today are a gift from the beautiful Zambian Region for the Bicentenary Celebrations.

Welcome to all of you, wherever you are.



Sr Annette Cunliffe in the Offertory Procession with Sr Namangolwu, Zambian Sister

Welcome to our friends, family members, friends of Mary Aikenhead, priests and members of other religious communities who have come to join with us. I welcome also the members of our sister congregation in Australia who have come such a long distance to be with us and the large delegation who have come from Scotland this morning to join in the celebrations.

Modern technology has made it possible for our Sisters, friends and co-workers in Australia, Zambia, Nigeria, Malawi, California, England, Scotland and those at home here in Ireland who are unable to be present, to join in the presentation through live streaming.

Communication was always important to Mary Aikenhead and she left behind her a wealth of riches contained in her letters, the only way possible in her day to keep in touch with people, and especially the Sisters, in her young congregation. I am sure that she is very pleased that her whole congregation throughout the world can join with us in this celebration.

Once again, welcome to all, and I look forward to meeting you afterwards for some refreshments in the Convent across the Road in Donnybrook.



Sr Margaret Fitzgerald, carrying Australian Flag with Sister Madeline from California



Sr Clare Nolan, Leader of the Australian Congregation, reading the first reading

We now present some symbols chosen by the Sisters in the different provinces and regions of the congregation to represent their area:

**Agatha Lucy Onye** and **Freda Ehimuan** bring the Nigerian flag and a poster showing the mark of Nigeria held by hands of different colours. This depicts the multicultural aspect of Nigeria, representing unity and diversity and our working together to building the Kingdom.

**Madeline Meagher** and **Eva Bryan** from California present the US flag and a large shell. The shell represents the call to listen to the movement of God's Spirit in the signs of the times and in the hearts of all those we encounter.

**Muriel Larkin** and **Imelda Sibanda** carry the Malawian flag and a poster representing Malawi as the warm heart of Africa. This slogan expresses the hospitality, generosity and friendliness of the Malawian people.

**Pauline Smith, Agnes Morgan** and **Jacinta Rankin** bring the English and Scottish flags and the sculpture *Woman of the Untold Story*, a copy of the one in St Joseph's Convent, Hackney. She sits on a bench with an open book in her hand. It represents the stories of all those who have helped the Sisters of Charity since they arrived in 1840.

**Namunji Silishebo** and **Godfridah Moondwa** carry the Zambian flag and a basket of fruit in open hands. The open hands symbolise availability and openness to give and receive from others. The basket of fruit is a symbol of the gifts and talents that each member of the region brings to her community and ministry.

**Margaret Fitzgerald** and **Margaret Guy** carry the Australian flag and a case with memorabilia of the beginnings of the Sisters of Charity in Australia, as well as symbols depicting the people and the flora of Australia.

**Mary Vaughan** and **Paula Kenny** bring the Irish flag and a plant. The plant is a symbol of finding the sacred in the ordinary of daily life, in community, in ministry and among family and friends.



Symbols from each Province and Country were placed on the sanctuary



# Homily by Archbishop Brown

Papal Nuncio to Ireland at the 200th Anniversary Mass held in Donnybrook on 15th August, 2015.

## My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.

We don't know, because the scriptures and God's revelation hasn't told us, how old this girl was, in what is now Northern Israel and Nazareth, when, in a very mysterious way, she was encountered by an Angel and asked to be the Mother of God. We don't know how old she was when that happened, but we can be relatively sure that she was a teenager, a young person who says 'yes', let it be done to me according to thy word. And at that moment, the word became flesh and dwelt among us and dwelled in her womb and Mary became the Mother of God, the Mother of Christ, the Mother of our Saviour.

Today we celebrate her Assumption into heaven, the fact that she, body and soul has been taken into heavenly glory, what orthodox Christians call her "dormition": going to sleep in glory in heaven. We, in thinking about her in heaven, go back to the origins of that call, the first moments after she receives the Angel's message, when she goes immediately to help her kinswoman, Elizabeth. And the gospel we heard says that Mary set out at that time and went with haste, or went as quickly as she could, to a town in the hill country of Judah. So we see in this mysterious encounter between a teenage girl and God, we see this dynamic of encounter leading to mission, we see the dynamic of receiving the word of God in her body, even in a physical way and then going out to help, to serve. And that is at the essence and the base of the vocation of the Religious Sisters of Charity.

As I mentioned at the beginning of Mass the motto of your Congregation is so beautiful – *Caritas Christi Urget Nos*, the love of Christ Impels us, pushes us, urges us on, leads us forward – *Caritas Christi Urget Nos*. You are the Religious Sisters of Charity, of Caritas, Sisters of that Charity, urged on by that Charity of Christ. That love of Christ has been poured into your hearts.

Today we celebrate 200 years of your vocation. 200 years of going with urgency to the poor in their various forms; your apostolate and your mission to help, to serve, to love those who, as Pope Francis



His Excellency Archbishop Brown, Papal Nuncio to Ireland delivering his homily at the 200 year Celebration Mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart at Donnybrook on 15th August 2015

constantly reminds us, are on the peripheries of our society; the sick, the trafficked, the abandoned, the small. People that society doesn't pay attention to, you, as Religious Sisters of Charity, do pay attention to, because you have received the gift that is that love of Christ, that *Caritas Christi*.

And when we think about Mary and that encounter with the Angel in Nazareth leading her to mission, we can't not think this afternoon of your Founder, the newly Venerable Mary Aikenhead.

How similar in a certain sense was her experience? She, as all of you know, of course, was born of a Protestant Father and a Catholic Mother. When she was about 12 years old, her Aunt Rebecca Gorman returned from Bruges and began to speak to this 12 year old, perhaps 13 year old, a teenage girl, about Jesus, about the Holy Mass, about Adoration, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. And she began to go to Mass, and began to allow that call of Christ, that closeness with Christ, that encounter with Christ, to open her heart as a teenage girl.

15 years old when she decides to become a Catholic. How amazing is that? A teenage girl decides she is going to become a Catholic.

She hears the gospel of the rich man and Lazarus and she, as all of you know, was from a prosperous family in Cork and feels this desire to go and serve, to go and take care of the poorest around her.

So exactly what happens in a certain way in the life of Our Lady in Nazareth, is repeated in the 19th Century in Cork with Mary Aikenhead. That encounter with Jesus, her encounter in the Eucharistic liturgy in the Mass, in adoration, in Benediction. That encounter with him which leads her intuitively to mission, to a desire to serve the one whom she loved. So she goes with a great desire, to the peripheries to take care of the poor.

She was inspired by the French Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and she prepared herself for her mission, training with the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in York, England. And then 200 years ago almost exactly at this time, when she was 28 years old, when she had been a Catholic now for some 13 years, and done a novitiate of preparation of 3 years, she took temporary vows with another woman, who was 14 years older than she, Melissa Walsh, and they came to this City, the City of Dublin and began their work with the poor.

But Mary Aikenhead, in her vows, took a special fourth vow to live their lives, to devote their lives, to the service of the poor. And this is what she did, establishing houses for the poor, all over Ireland, inspiring countless young women to follow her and that is what we celebrate today. 200 years of women who have said 'yes' to Christ, who have said 'yes' to the Lord.

They have received that Caritas Christi, that love for Jesus, which then transmitted in the mission of the sisters, in whatever mission that may be, in prison ministry, as Venerable Mary Aikenhead sent her sisters in to schools and hospitals and orphanages, in all the ways possible to serve the poor, because of her love for Christ.

So what we celebrate today of course is the beautiful example of Mary Aikenhead, but what we really celebrate are all of you, the Sisters who have come after her. Each of you in your own way, in the secret of your heart, in whatever way God used, has heard the call of Christ, has received that love of Jesus which has led you to be a Religious Sister of Charity and which makes you very different from someone doing what we can call secular social work or secular development work. All of which is great and important. We need to do development work, we need to do social work, but what makes a Religious Sister of Charity different is the motivation. It is Caritas Christi Urget Nos. The love of Christ is what impels a Sister of Charity on and makes her life not a profession, not a job, but a vocation, an interpersonal response to Jesus who has called you, the Sisters, to do and walk in the footsteps of Mary Aikenhead; to serve the poor; and there is nothing more beautiful than that.

Throughout the world today, if I am not mistaken, there are more than 400 Religious Sisters of Charity in your community. In Ireland, England, Scotland and Zambia, California, Nigeria, Malawi and, since 1838, even during the time of Mary Aikenhead, in Australia. This amazing explosion of love, this explosion of Christ's love, has gone all over the world because one girl, in 1815, made vows and said 'yes' to God and changed the history of Ireland, and changed the history



Sr Clare Nolan, Sr Genny Walsh and Sr Margaret Fitzgerald after the Mass, outside the Church

of Australia, and is changing the history of Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia, because of her 'yes', the 'yes' that Mary Aikenhead made to the love of Christ.

Pope Francis, last 18th March, 2015, has issued a decree proclaiming her heroic virtues which makes her Venerable Mary Aikenhead and that is another reason for celebrating in a very special way this 200th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity. It is interesting to see in her life, in Mary Aikenhead's life, that at every stage it was the love of Christ that impelled her on, that pushed her forward; that encounter with Jesus which was at the basis of everything she did.

When she was young, she was very vigorous but, as you know, the last 30 years of her life she was disabled, she was in a wheelchair or in bed, paralysed and disabled. And yet for 30 years, that same love of Christ continued to pour forth from her, and isn't that a great example even for Sisters today, a good number of whom are older now, but in no way is their vocation any less. Because what Mary Aikenhead shows us is not what we do, or not what you do, but who you are that is so important and so beautiful. To be someone who has said 'yes' to the Lord, who has surrendered your life to him.

And you know, God continues to call young women to that life. God continues to knock on the door of the human heart and say, as he said to Mary Aikenhead, come follow me, serve me in the poorest of the poor. And, in her life at every stage, we see this response.

So for all of you Sisters of the Religious Sisters of Charity, in whatever country you are, in whatever stage of religious life you find yourself, you can see in your foundress a tremendous example of that love. A tremendous example which is, as I said earlier, different from a professional love, a 9-5 love, it is a personal love and that is what has motivated and impelled the Sisters to do their beautiful work throughout the world.

My Soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. Certainly they are the words of the Mother of God, Mary, as we celebrate her assumption. Certainly, they are the words in the heart of Mary Aikenhead at the beginning, at the middle, and at the end of her vocation. And I believe that the words are also echoed in every one of you Sisters, every one of you who has said 'yes' to the Lord. Your Soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.

And I think I speak for all the priests, all the lay people and all the other religious here today when I say to you, "thank you". Thank you for having said 'yes'. It makes all the difference. We are deeply grateful for that 'yes' and we pray that in a 100 years, when another Papal Nuncio is here, and comes across from Naverne Road, that he will find more sisters here to celebrate the 300th Anniversary of your religious congregation. And on that occasion they will reflect also on your witness, your work, on your attempt, so beautiful, to bring into this world that love of Christ which urges us on, which carries us forward, and which will carry us eventually into heavenly glory, as it has with Our Lady, the mother of God whose feast we celebrate today.



# Australian celebrations

## of our 200 Year Anniversary

**As the actual celebration in Donnybrook took place at midnight Sydney time, our Australian celebrations were delayed until the afternoon of Sunday 16 August.**

### New South Wales

In Sydney, almost fifty sisters, together with two guests Kevin Walsh and Sue Andruskin, gathered at Dooleys Waterview Club at 4.00pm on Sunday 16 August.

We were warmly greeted by our chief hostess Kerry Barrass, given a lucky door number and escorted to the Silverwater Room for afternoon tea where Ellen O’Carrigan had generously provided lovely flower arrangements on each table. At 4.30pm, we linked into and began watching the YouTube kindly developed by Bruce Stephens from the video-streamed live version of the Eucharist at Sacred Heart Church Donnybrook. This was a very moving experience in every way, delightfully punctuated by whispered exclamations every time we saw “one of us”! We felt so involved that not only did we join in the prayers, hymns and kiss of peace, but were half-expecting to stand up and go to Communion! We also voted Archbishop Charles Brown and his homily the “best ever”. At the conclusion of Mass, we proceeded to the dining-room where tables had been set for us to share the celebratory evening meal – lots of stories woven into our eating and drinking!

On Monday 17th, I went to Cronulla to share a similar experience with our five sisters living at Stella Maris. They were delighted to be included in this way and went to a great deal of trouble to explore a suitable room as a venue, to organise morning tea and book me in for lunch. Again, we were totally immersed in the Eucharistic celebration, the readers, music – especially the Hail Mary sung by the Zambian sisters – and again voted the homily by Archbishop Charles Brown “the best”!

Margaret Beirne

Right: Gatherings of Sisters in Melbourne and Sydney to celebrate the 200 years anniversary

### Victoria

The Celebration in Melbourne was held at Fredricks Function Centre on Mt Alexander Road, Essendon. The owners, the Calleo Family had daughters attend St Columba’s College and were delighted that we chose their venue for our celebration. All 33 Sisters were well looked after, with the A/V and the beautiful meal which followed the Mass.

The liturgy was very conducive to prayer and each one felt as though they were really present with those in Donnybrook Church and joined in with all the responses. While we were waiting for the Dinner to be served we sang the Song ‘We are Australian’. It was a great evening and we are all very grateful to be able to celebrate together in fine style.

Cate O’Brien

### Queensland

The Brisbane sisters gathered in the Board Room at St Vincent’s Brisbane on Monday 17th August. We began with morning tea at 10am and were joined by members of the management team from St Vincent’s and Lynette Ybarzabal our health care coordinator. After some refreshments, we viewed the Mass from Dublin and enjoyed picking out familiar faces among those assembled – our Australian sisters and other friends from our Founding Congregation. After a short break, the Sisters then gathered in the convent dining room for a meal together. Margaret Mines led us in grace, then we sat at tables decorated in the Congregation’s colours for the meal. We all agreed that it was great to be together and wondered what the 300 year celebration will be like.

Libbey Byrne



# The Sisters of Charity Dinner

16 August 2015, Dublin

by Sr Genevieve Walsh rsc

## Sr Clare was asked to say *Grace Before Our Meal:*

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

*As we begin this meal with grace, let us become aware of the memory carried inside the food before us (pause) – seeds and animals – (pause) never speaking a word, but nourished by the earth, to become our food today. The work of all the strangers whose hands prepared it, the privilege of health and wealth that enables us to feast and celebrate.*

*Yes! We are indeed grateful for all God's blessings this day.*

*Today is a day for remembering how all our history comes down to our hands, how we carry the lines (of Mary Aikenhead and all Sisters of Charity who came after her), pressed into our palms; a geography of generations inscribed upon us, like a map.*

*We lay our hands then upon this ancient terrain here in Ireland, in gratitude and praise.*

*So – in the circle of love which unites us around this table, let us begin our celebration!*

*Words adapted from words of John O'Donohue and Jan Richardson*



The Australian Sisters of Charity gather at the conclusion of the Tribute

## The Tribute

During this Dinner we, the Australian Sisters of Charity, were given the opportunity to express in prose and song a Tribute to Our Foundress, Venerable Mary Aikenhead, and the consequent story that followed her sending five Sisters of Charity to Australia in 1838. This was the format our presentation took.

**Words of introduction** This is not going to be a concert item for this Grand Day but rather a Tribute.

**A tribute to** Mary Aikenhead, young in age, young in Congregation, having only a few sisters, sent five sisters to Australia in 1838. The five Sisters' dedication and loyalty to the Charism of Mary Aikenhead, the hardships they endured; the creative tenacity in their service of the poor. The young enthusiastic commitment of the women who became Sisters of Charity in the early days of the

Congregation in Sydney, Australia. Their loyalty to the Congregation when two of the five Sisters returned to Ireland. Their determination when asked by Archbishop Polding to join his Founding congregation. Their definite No allowing the Congregation to grow and flourish.

**A tribute to** Mother Xavier Williams...one of the three sisters who came from Ireland and were exiled to Tasmania because they were 'a cause of trouble' to the Bishops. It was she who asked Mother Mary Frances McGuigan to come to Hobart. Her request was rewarded with the Sydney and Hobart Communities becoming one again.

**A tribute to** The Superior Generals of the Founding and the Australian Congregation who over the years, came together, in conversation and friendship. And look at us today...

[Continued on back cover](#)



Sr Mary Christian presents Sr Clare with the special portrait of Mary Aikenhead



Sr Margaret Guy presents Sr Mary with the Symbols on behalf of the Australian Sisters



# Sister Joan – 100 not out!

Sr Joan Jurd celebrates her 100th birthday, 19 August 2015

by Penelope Kerr (Cunliffe)

Sister Joan's clear instruction was that her 100th birthday was to be celebrated with the minimum of fuss but this did not stop members of her family, Sisters of Charity and fellow residents of St Joseph's Village Auburn from gathering there on August 19th to celebrate it with great joy. We began with Mass in the Chapel celebrated by Father Isaac MSC who, while respecting Joan's wish for no sermon or singing, was able to bring to mind for us all her warm, prayerful and loving presence. The readings chosen for this special Mass all spoke of love: as Father Isaac said, those readings said it all, no sermon was needed.

We gathered in the Activities Room for Morning Tea and the cutting of the enormous 100th Birthday Cake. There were no speeches, though Sister Annette Cunliffe took the opportunity to welcome all to the event and to mention that Sister Joan had received congratulations from Her Majesty the Queen, from the Governor General, the Prime Minister and to the great delight and astonishment of Sister Joan, from Steve Waugh. He is one of her favourite cricketers and also a favourite with her for his Foundation which supports children and young adults with rare diseases.

We were all delighted to have the chance to acknowledge the part Sister Joan has played in our lives. She was born in Moree, Northern New South Wales, in 1915, the eldest daughter and third of six children. She grew up on a sheep property. Her primary education was managed by a governess and then at boarding school, first Lochinvar, then St Vincent's College Potts Point. She entered the Sisters of Charity soon after finishing her Leaving Certificate and after Profession gained her Certificate of Teaching. Most of her long teaching career was spent at St Vincent's and at St Mary's Star of the Sea Hurstville at both of which she was also Principal for some years. She was a wonderful English teacher.



Sr Joan Jurd

Sister Joan's interest in sport, especially cricket, is well known, as is her voracious appetite for the written word. She has a great sense of humour and the ridiculous. She can discuss current affairs and politics on an equal footing with her many highly credentialed relatives including lawyers and a press gallery journalist. It is she who is best informed of news about family members. Those who visit her will find a picture gallery from the oldest to the youngest. But in remembering these secular interests which make Sister Joan such an interesting and welcoming person, we must also reflect that the source of her spirit and her calm lies in deep devotion to her faith and to prayer.

Many of the Sisters present were ex-students of Sister Joan and recounted tales of their time in her care, reflecting on the influence she had on them. When I later shared some of these recollections with Joan, she was quite bemused but then wondered if it was because she genuinely liked the students she taught. The warm regard for her as a teacher was underlined by the dozens of cards she received from ex-students, including some she had not seen for over 50 years.

There were greetings from St Vincent's College too, recognising her significant service and her place in its long tradition. Sister Joan's room was festooned with cards lining the ceiling and beautiful floral displays on every surface.

Sister Joan enjoyed the celebration but was matter of fact about her achievement: "I didn't do anything", she said, "I just kept on living". She acknowledged the staff at St Joseph's and suggested that there will be many more centenarians there as the residents are looked after so well.

Her fellow Sisters were warmly thanked and so too her family. As a member of that family I continue to be grateful to have my vibrant, loving and wise Aunt present in my life for these many years.



# My pilgrimage to Ireland

## A time of blessing

by Sr Margaret Valentine rsc

I received the telephone call from Sr Annette telling me that I had been the lucky winner to travel to Ireland for the Mary Aikenhead Pilgrimage, as you can imagine I was overjoyed with the news! What a blessing was in store for me.

People around me jumped into action as I prepared to set off for Ireland. Their enthusiasm, encouragement, generosity and interest led me to be grateful for yet another blessing in my life.

Finally July 14 arrived – the pilgrimage had commenced.

For the next ten days I had the privilege of walking in the footsteps of Mary Aikenhead, visiting many of the sacred sites connected with her story, with 18 men and women who minister in Mary Aikenhead Ministries in Queensland, NSW and Victoria – in hospitals, aged care facilities, colleges, or on boards.

The aim of the Mary Aikenhead Ministry Pilgrimage was to walk the pathways of our Congregational heritage and to take time to ponder the ways of God in the lives of those who have gone before us and in so doing gain a deeper appreciation of the times and circumstances in which they lived.

There were many highlights for me during these ten days.

Our visit to the Heritage Centre in Harold's Cross and our visit to Glendalough were certainly among those.

While at the Heritage Centre we were surrounded by objects that were actually touched and used by Mary Aikenhead – her desk, her wheelchair, her bed – all housed in the convent she actually lived in. Reflecting on this reality was an emotional experience for me – this courageous, visionary woman spent much time here – crippled with pain – and yet still reaching out to her Sisters and the poor with whom they ministered.



Above: Mary Aikenhead Ministries Pilgrims gather around Sr Baptist De Lacy's grave at Donnybrook Cemetery

Below: Sr Margaret at Mary Aikenhead's desk, Heritage Centre, Harold's Cross



## There were many highlights for me during these ten days.

Glendalough was a place of such beauty and serenity. I was struck by the many visitors of all ages and speaking many languages, who like us Pilgrims, walked the tracks on the Glendalough Property – immersed in the beauty, seeking peace and reaching for something outside of themselves.

However for me, July 22 at Donnybrook was the time of greatest blessing. Here we had the privilege of gathering with many Sisters, from our Founding Congregation, to celebrate Mary Aikenhead's feast day on this the 200th anniversary of the Congregation. There was a feeling of warmth, love, excitement, thanksgiving, gratitude and joyfulness amongst those gathered.

It was indeed a great privilege for me to present flowers, brought from Australia, at Mary Aikenhead's grave – a blessing that will remain with me.

While walking in Mary Aikenhead's footsteps I was aware that while we travelled in comfort, (good walking shoes, comfortable clothes, nourishing food, clean, even footpaths to walk on, a comfortable bus to ride in, protective rain gear), Mary Aikenhead and her Sisters travelled a very different path.

Their hardships, poverty and generosity gave birth to a strong band of women who offered, and continue to offer, hope and love to the poor and marginalised.

On return my prayer is of deep gratitude for all these experiences, for the overwhelming hospitality of the Irish Sisters of Charity and for our family, friends and RSC's who walked in spirit with us.

# Sr Margaret Costigan rsc

22 June-22 August 2015

Eulogy by Clare Nolan rsc, Congregational Leader

## St Peter's Church, Clayton

31 August 2015, 10.30am

Today we give thanks for the life of Margaret.

Where do we begin to sum up Margaret's life as a Sister of Charity? Her motto '*Suscipe Domine*' (Take Lord), reflected a life given over to God and the core of her ministry was rooted in her fourth vow of Service of the Poor. Margaret was driven by the radical and courageous living out of Gospel values.

Margaret spent a great deal of her ministry in the field of education, social justice, supporting our indigenous sisters and brothers and being advocate for those in need in our society. The most frequently heard comment about Margaret was "she is such a brilliant woman and a brilliant teacher!" One sister has written of Margaret, "Her Mathematics Program, for students mathematically challenged, was 100% practical even down to having them fill out a TAB form!" Other Sisters have recalled when working with Margaret in Social Justice areas her passion for a man called Paulo Freire and his efforts and methods for educating the poor. He was the author of a work called *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and he helped to raise consciousness about the poor and oppressed which Margaret passed on to us. What an intellect she had and what a heart for the marginalised. Many of us did not grasp either of those gifts.

Margaret challenged mediocrity and complacency and was never afraid to speak out, even knowing she might be ridiculed or labelled. Our 2014 Chapter Statement asks that we "respond courageously to the call to mission, going out to the margins..." Margaret lived this directive on a daily basis.

Margaret followed the beat of her own drum as she worked with the Koori people in Melbourne for nearly 30 years and I think we can all attest to the awareness raising Margaret achieved about Indigenous issues. I will always associate Margaret with Project Dreaming and the beautiful Indigenous painting she treasured called "Coming Together."



Sr Margaret Costigan rsc

The last sentence of the explanation of that piece of art says "The lines with the dots represent the tracks, and when they arrive at the end of their journey, they are as one people." This was Margaret's dream and with her sleeves rolled up and a 'great heart and willing mind' as Mary Aikenhead asked of her Sisters, she got in there and made a difference.

Margaret loved getting together for Congregational celebrations or discussions and the last occasion was last Sunday week when we got together to view the 200 years Mass in Ireland celebrating the Founding of our Congregation in 1815. Margaret was always proud of Sister's accomplishments and many of us have been on the receiving end of her genuine praise, gratitude and support. A Sister overseas on a special mission for the Congregation received an affirming email from Margaret. It said "I have no doubt you will do us proud." And that kind of sums up the way she would affirm sisters whenever they were on a journey for the Congregation. Margaret supported and was involved in days with our Sisters of Charity Companions. She was both an ex-student and teacher at CLC and kept in touch with students.

Margaret loved the poor and needy, she loved the Congregation and the Sisters. She loved her family. She was so proud of each and every member and loved them dearly. She delighted in the achievements of all, especially nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. We heard of family gatherings, we were alerted to watch channel whatever on the TV when a family member was speaking up about social justice issues. I won't go on because I know Michael will talk about the family. I just want the family to know how she loved, enjoyed, and appreciated being a Costigan from Preston!

In conclusion, the words of Paul to the Romans 14:7 come to my mind: "The life and death of each of us has its influence on others" – well your life dear Margaret, has had a positive influence on so many of us, and on many that will remain unknown to us. The suddenness of your death will have taught us all different things. I am sure it has taught us all to live each moment fully. You have been a faithful Sister of Charity. St John of the Cross tells us, that in the end we will be judged on how well we loved, especially the poor. Mary Aikenhead would say, let the poor be our judge. One of the earliest symbols used in the Clothing Ceremony of a Sister of Charity was a key. This key was presented to the novice by a small child representing the poor. It represented the key to heaven and the poor were to become OUR key to heaven.

The Roman poet Virgil puts it beautifully:

*"Only near the poor, close to the 'tears of things,' in solidarity with suffering, can we understand ourselves, love one another well, imitate Jesus, and live his full Gospel."*

Well Margaret, you pass with flying colors. Your door to heaven has been thrown open wide. Come, you whom my Father has blessed, receive the kingdom prepared for you.

**We love you Margaret and we will miss you so much.**



# Celebrating our Jubilarians

## Diamond Jubilarians

On the 6th August Srs Marina Ward, Margaret Nabbs and Deirdre Hickey celebrated the wonderful milestone of their Diamond Jubilees, 60 years as a consecrated religious in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. Both Srs Marina and Margaret celebrated privately with their Communities.

### Sr Deirdre Hickey

Together with Sisters and friends, Sr Deirdre celebrated her Diamond Jubilee with a Eucharist led by Fr Dominic Nguyen, Chaplain at St Vincent's Campus, Darlinghurst. In September Deirdre and Colleen Holohan, one of our Golden Jubilarians, had a combined celebration with their Community at Leura Convent.



Community celebration at Leura Convent

## Golden Jubilarians

The 14th August was the anniversary for the 50 years of Religious Profession of Srs Mary Gabrielle Clarke, Sr Rose Holman, Sr Irene Crockett, Sr Virginia Mahony and Sr Colleen Holohan.

### Sr Rose Holman

Sisters from her own and neighbouring communities, family and friends, joined Rose in celebrating her Golden Jubilee at Paddington on Saturday 15 August. Father Phil Miscamble OFM celebrated the Eucharist in the convent chapel. Following the Mass, Rose and Marie invited all the guests to a celebratory lunch in the nearby Centennial Park Café.



Golden Jubilarians – Srs Irene, Rose, Colleen, Mary Gabrielle and Virginia

### Sr Virginia Mahony's Golden Jubilee of Profession

In her homily at the celebration of Virginia's Golden Jubilee, on Sunday 23 August 2015, Sr Margaret Beirne said that Virginia's motto is taken from John's Gospel where Jesus says of Himself as the Good Shepherd: "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10). And "Only Virginia knows what this means for her."

Her Golden Jubilee has provided Virginia with the opportunity to stop and reflect on "no matter what our role in life, our words and way of being can carry lasting impact and meaning".



Golden Jubilarians Srs Mary Gabriele and Virginia

Virginia gives thanks for the blessings she continues to experience in her life and is grateful that she able to leave an imprint on so many people through her 50 years of ministry.

*"I join with Mary Aikenhead: 'Thank our good God for God's unfailing blessing on all our works'."*



Fr Dominic with the Sisters at Sr Deirdre's jubilee



The Sisters celebrate with Virginia in Melbourne

# Book launch

*'The Love of Christ impels us...  
to the Ends of the Earth'*

On 8 September, at St Joseph's Auburn, our congregational leader, Sr Clare Nolan, launched a book that compiles the stories of many of our Sisters of Charity who have ministered in overseas countries.

In welcoming all those present, the book's compiler Sr Karan Varker explained how she had been inspired to initiate this creative work: "The incentive for gathering these wonderful stories of our Sisters' overseas ministries has been for me a long-time conviction that they are too important to be lost. The impetus to do something about it came from Sr Anne Crowley who told me a story about our Sisters in PNG where Anne herself had ministered".

With Clare's support and encouragement, Karan invited sisters to tell and write their stories. She also spent time in the congregational archives "with the most generous assistance of Janet Howse and further assistance from the SVH archivist Anne Cooke." Karan is also grateful to Melinda Gutierrez for the formatting of the text and incorporating photos and to Sr Angela Burke who did the proof-reading.

In launching the book, Sr Clare said:

*"What amazed Karan and her support team was the large number of Sisters involved in Ministry overseas over the years.*

*All of them were deeply spiritual women not afraid to roll up their sleeves and get right into it – they sought and found the poor and thereby lived the charism of the Congregation in action.*

*They can say with Mary Aikenhead:*

*"There is no charity where there is no respect for the poor... We ought to pray constantly for the means of relieving the suffering of the poor."*



Sr Karan and Sr Clare Nolan present the new book

*This year we celebrate the founding of our Congregation in 1815 in Ireland. In 1838 we received our first Sisters of Charity on mission in the person of the first five Sisters sent to Australia (the ends of the earth) by Mary Aikenhead at the request of Dr Ullathorne. First stop – the women and children in the Female Factory Parramatta, NSW. So, for as long as the poor are with us, the work will continue.*

*Congratulations Karan on bringing out into the light the story of the Sisters of Charity on mission overseas. It is a great little collection of stories which I enjoyed reading so much. We now have a record for posterity, and the mission continues.*

*It gives me great pleasure to launch*

*The Love of Christ Impels Us...  
to the Ends of the Earth".*

## The Sisters of Charity Dinner

from page 07

**A tribute to**, in the words of the Song, 'We are Australian', Mother Mary Augustine Aikenhead:

*'We are one, But we are many and from all the lands on earth we come. We share a dream, and sing with one voice, I am, You are, We are Australian.'*

With that Mother Mary Aikenhead appeared... and slowly drifted among the tables... all were spellbound!

We continued the tribute with Sisters representing the first five sisters telling of those early days as the First Religious on Australian soil. Intermittently throughout the Tribute the Chorus of the song was sung.

This tribute was followed by individual and group photos with Mother Mary Aikenhead. In a way, celebrating 200 years since Mary Aikenhead began our Congregation, we were celebrating our past, our present and the many ministries witnessing to our Fourth Vow of Service of the Poor. The entrance of Mother Mary Aikenhead in her traditional habit, brought us all back to the reality that we, in love and admiration for what she had begun, was the real reason for our gathering and celebrating. We, from our hearts, just wanted to sincerely say: *Thank You, Venerable Mary Aikenhead, Pray for us!*



The Past Meets the Present!



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