



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF AUSTRALIA



## Keep in touch

OCTOBER 2016 / VOLUME 16 / NUMBER 3

# Back to Toowoomba

by Sr Colleen Noonan rsc

In June 2016, I was invited back to Toowoomba to celebrate the 30th anniversary of SPRED, an organisation for the religious development and support of people with an intellectual disability, with which I had been involved for a number of years. To mark the occasion they were having a Masquerade Ball and I was invited as a special guest.



Cutting of the Anniversary Cake – Mary Jane Tully, Loretta Coman, (Coordinator) Stephen Kearney, Treska, Sr Colleen

It was lovely to return (by direct flight) to Toowoomba again and my former assistant Carmel Sheridan offered me a bed and took me around to many of the old haunts. The growth in the Toowoomba area is quite remarkable especially around Highfields and I think it will develop even more in the years to come. Some of you may remember the long wait we used to have around 3.30pm when trying to get through Toowoomba and having to wait for the passing of about 60 coal cars travelling along the rail line. I was delighted to see that there is now an overpass and some progress has been made on the second range crossing ... at long last.

One trip of course was to Mackenzie Street to see what had happened with our lovely convent and I was pleased to see the basic structure was still there, although Sr Tarci's lovely garden no longer existed. However, there was now ample parking space in the front yard and on two levels at the back for the patients of the Doctors, who were working there. Parking was becoming a problem in 2007 and I am sure must be worse now with the increase of population.

I do not need to tell you that the Masquerade Ball was a wonderful success. One of our little groups even came from Roma for the occasion. Their Carers brought them for the weekend as a special holiday event. As soon as the music started people were up, with or without partners and gyrating to the music. It was a joy to watch and take part in!! One young lady described the night as "the best day of my life."

An exhibition of "real" dancing was also organised and then we attempted to do a progressive jive, which was a challenge especially when some people were not sure about which was their left or right foot.



Dancing the Progressive Jive



Carmel Sheridan, (former P.A.), Sr Colleen Noonan rsc and Mary Herbert

Some of the local politicians were present and I believe they stayed longer than had been anticipated. One of the leaders (Peter Maloney), who was involved in the early years came from Rockhampton for the event.

There was torrential rain just as everyone was arriving but though some changes of shoes etc. were needed nothing could dampen the enthusiasm of all present. The meal was lovely but most were eagerly anticipating their slice of the cake! It was as good as it looked.

The following day I visited Cathy Herbert and her dedicated sister Mary. Cathy celebrated her 60th birthday recently and despite almost being blind and having the limitations of Down's Syndrome, is living a full life. She loves being one of the Welcoming Team at St Therese's church and has had her photo taken with almost every celebrity who comes to Toowoomba!

At lunch time Carmel and I were invited to have lunch with Loretta Coman, the current coordinator and Mandi her secretary. It was a special time when we shared about our past and present experiences in SPRED and what was hoped for in the future. SPRED is a true expression of responding to needs and I pray that it might continue for many years.

# World Youth Day (WYD) 2016

An experience of a lifetime!

Sr Anne Taylor rsc

For many, attending WYD is the experience of a lifetime! From 16 July 1 to 6 August fourteen students from St Vincent's College, another teacher and myself took part in the World Youth Day pilgrimage to Poland.

We were travelling with *Catholic Schools Sydney* as *Bus 17* which also included three students St Mary's Cathedral College, six students from Marist College North Shore, their teachers, a chaplain and two Youth Ambassadors.

Before WYD we were fortunate to participate in a *Saints of Italy Pilgrimage* which involved visiting religious sites from Venice to Rome, including Assisi.

Leaving Rome we flew to Warsaw and then travelled to Krakow and Olimp – AGH University – our 'home' during WYD. Our first day in Krakow began with Mass for all Sydney pilgrims. Then we headed to central Krakow for a day of exploring, which included sampling cuisine – *'pierogi'*.

Highlight of Day 2 was an Australian gathering of over 3 000 pilgrims with addresses from Australian bishops, prayer, stories of the great Polish saints and yes ... uplifting music!

By afternoon Krakow's central square was pulsating with life and music – people everywhere, especially WYD pilgrims. WYD was about to begin ... we gathered for the Opening Mass.

The theme of WYD was:  
**'Blessed are the merciful;  
for they shall receive mercy'.**  
It was on this theme that  
Bishops from around the world  
lead catechesis – teaching and  
reflecting with the pilgrims.

Our final catechesis was with Australian Archbishop Prowse. Pilgrims were especially taken with his idea about prayer – *three S's – silence, stillness and simplicity.*



Left and below: World Youth Day Pilgrims gathering for Opening Mass – theme, 'Mercy'



The Papal Welcome and Way of the Cross were times of encounters with Pope Francis. Some of his inspirational messages were about a merciful heart being able to be a place of refuge for those in need such as refugees and immigrants, for it is able to move beyond its comfort zone and knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion. He spoke of building bridges and pulling down walls. He expressed hurt when young people want 'early retirement' and give up before life begins. They wear glum faces as if life has no meaning.

On Saturday we went on pilgrimage to Campus Misericordiae for the vigil and final Mass. At the vigil the Pope told pilgrims that Jesus was calling them to leave a mark on history! Pilgrims shared their own moving stories. Each person was given a candle and as darkness fell these were held aloft and God's presence was truly felt. The Pope prayed with the pilgrims and benediction was given.

At the final Mass the Pope told the pilgrims that they had come to Krakow to meet Jesus as Zacchaeus did in today's Gospel. Jesus wants to draw near to us so that his life and our life can truly meet. He spoke about obstacles Zacchaeus faced in doing this and we too would find challenges. At the creed we wore a white stole bearing our baptismal date – a reminder of our commitment to go and tell the *Good News* to others.

Leaving Krakow we visited Wadowice, hometown of John Paul II and sampled the papal cream cake – a favourite of his! A few days retreat in Zakopane, a town in the foothills of the majestic Tatra Mountains in southern Poland followed. We then travelled through Slovakia to Hungary and flew home from the magnificent city of Budapest.





Above: The Opening Mass

Right: Candle light vigil followed by closing Mass, Campus Misericordia

Below: WYD Pilgrims Krakow's Central Square



Above: Walking to retreat at Zakopane, a town in the foothills of the majestic Tatra mountains

# St John the Baptist Primary

The love of Christ urges us on

by Emeritus Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM FRACI

St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School in Clifton Hill was founded in 1886 and, for much of its history, the Sisters of Charity ministered at the school.

The school and parish seek to promote this heritage and, for some years, the school has had both Aikenhead House, which has the team colour of green, and the Aikenhead Wing.

The latter encompasses school facilities as well as a parish functions venue. Recently, the *Aikenhead Wing* has received distinctive new signage which is highly visible in busy Queen's Parade, Clifton Hill.



The Aikenhead Wing at St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School, Clifton Hill, Victoria

Further, St John's School has taken its founders' motto as its own – *'The love of Christ urges us on'* – and emphasises that this remains at the heart of the school ethos.

The school prayer also highlights that the spirit of the Sisters of Charity remains alive in Clifton Hill:

*God of Wonders, grant us your guidance and blessing as we carry on the work of our founders, the Sisters of Charity; we give thanks for our history and we look forward to continuing the tradition.*

*Open our eyes to the needs of the world around us so that we can truly become leaders in the world today and tomorrow.*

*Help us to learn and grow, and to love Your Son, Jesus.*

*Amen*

# Congratulations to our Jubilarians

by Sr Clare Nolan rsc

What is it that we celebrate on the day of a Sister's Jubilee? We celebrate our Baptismal Call and the Sister's faithfulness to a deepening of that Call from God to be a Sister of Charity, a daughter of Mary Aikenhead, living the Vows of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and Service of the Poor in our world and in our Church.

We celebrate the Sister of Charity who has given her life for love – as a Sister of love, Gospel woman, contemplative in action, servant of the poor in the spirit of Mary Aikenhead. We celebrate her uniqueness which she brings to her ministries and her many gifts and talents.

What a joy it has been to celebrate with these Sisters who have given, 70, 60 and 50 years of Religious Profession as Sisters of Charity.

## Diamond Jubilarians – 60 years of Religious Profession

**Sr Patricia Scully**, a great woman of the Church, always ready to break the bread of Canon Law – articulated through her motto –  
*'Behold O Lord,  
I come to do your will'*

**Sr Patricia Nunan**, a woman of wit and humour, endearingly called a 'character!' –  
*'In the name of the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Ghost'*

have been God walking with her throughout these 60 years.

**Sr Margaret Galvin**, woman of faith and love; her motto –  
*'Behold the handmaid  
of the Lord'*

**Sr Ellen O'Carrigan**, her motto, a guiding force in her life –  
*'To give and not  
to count the cost'*

**Sr Mary Maguire**, a fellow disciple of Jesus living out the Gospel daily, inspired by her motto –  
*'Fiat Volutas Tua'*

**Sr Maree Henderson**, who shared the love of nature, science, and their place in Creation. Her chosen motto –  
*'You are with me Lord Jesus'*

**Sr Monette Mason**, who has lived our Charism so generously –  
*'Let what you have said  
be done to me'*



Above (from left): Fr Tony Feeney, P.P., Margaret Galvin, Patricia Nunan, Patricia Scully and Sr Cate O'Brien



Left: Sr Patricia Scully, Sr Patricia Nunan and Sr Margaret Galvin



## Golden Jubilarians – 50 years of Religious Profession as a Sisters of Charity

**Sr Carol Pedersen**, always a nurse motivated by Mary Aikenhead's dream that the love of Christ would impel us to serve. Her motto to guide and sustain her –

*'Sitio, I thirst'*

**Sr Maria Wheeler**, a woman of great hospitality and care, a contemplative in action, and a true daughter of Mary Aikenhead, sustained by her motto –

*'For Thee alone'*



Sr Ellen O'Carrigan



Sr Mary Maguire



Sr Maree Henderson

*"Our place, as Sisters of Charity, is not where we live, or where we work; our place is where we love, where we witness."*

Marian Ambrosio



Sr Carol Pedersen, Bishop Des Moore msc,  
Sr Maria Wheeler and Sr Clare Nolan

# Words of remembrance

## Sr Elizabeth Dwyer rsc

(12 November 1927 - 12 July 2016)

**Good morning!** Once again in such a short time we Sisters of Charity are farewelling another of our dear sisters, Elizabeth Dwyer. We join with Elizabeth's sisters Margaret and Mary and her brother, Fr Bill SJ who is in India. Margaret cannot be with us this morning due to illness but she is with us here through all that binds us as family, as well as Fr Bill. We join with all the Dwyer family today in their sorrow and loss of someone very dear, and whom they will miss greatly. And we join with all Elizabeth's friends from early years till now who have kept faithful and true friendship with her.

What shall we Sisters of Charity say of this good woman, Elizabeth Mary Dwyer, 68 yrs a Sister of Charity? The words of Proverbs never disappoint in finding an answer. Amongst its many accolades about a good woman these seem fitting of Elizabeth:

*'She held out her hand to the poor, she opened her arms to the needy. She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughed without fear of the future. When she spoke, her words were wise and she gave instructions with kindness...yes, the woman who is wise is the one to praise.'* Prov 31:20,25-26,31

To us, Elizabeth was fondly called Liz. In 2013 Liz wrote a short story of her spiritual journey as a Sister of Charity and it tells of the significant quiet influence of Sisters in her discernment of a religious vocation and becoming a Sister of Charity. In that story she tells us that teaching was not her first choice of ministry. It was nursing. But God had different plans for Liz and it was education to which she was led and as a consecrated, apostolic woman, she gave it her all. She tackled it all – Infants, Primary, Secondary, Deputy Principal and Principal. In all these ministries Liz showed gentle care of staff, girls and boys. She was diligent in keeping in touch with ex-students. On July 10th I received an email from one of the Sisters who said two ex-students one from Queensland and one from Sydney phoned her concerned they could not contact Liz. These ex-students were taught by Liz in 1949/1950!

Upon leaving her last active ministry at St Columba's Essendon the Principal wrote:

*"On a personal note, I would like to thank you for your pastoral support and concern for me. Your gentle, constant and understanding shadowing of me was valued."*



This would be echoed in many other places of ministry as Liz moved among the people in her care. She gave broad-minded, wise counsel to the girls. They could talk to her about anything and confidences held. People warmed to Liz and because she had a nurturing way she was very approachable.

Her ministry took a new direction around 1977/78. Liz became the Assistant to the Novice Mistress till 1983. The qualities she brought to her education ministry and just being the person she was made her a good choice to walk with the young women who were entering the Sisters of Charity. The challenge in this ministry was to educate our Novices in a Post Vatican II time. Liz was very down to earth and had lots of common sense. Liz found herself in the Congregational Office Administration, Executive Secretary for the Conference of Religious Australia. She was reliable, steady and dependable. Liz was Community Leader on many occasions and sisters have shared with me that Liz always showed interest in them and was very encouraging of them. She was interested in the Sister's families and offered support when needed. She genuinely liked people. She was what we call today "a people person!"

Liz was so proud of her sister, Margaret and proud to be a Sister of Charity with her. And Mary... you were a stalwart to Liz (and these were Liz own words). She mentioned that in her last email to me. The last email I had from Liz was the morning of July 5th thanking myself and Council "for our constant care and especially of Margaret." That was Liz, always grateful and always expressed to the person directly. That evening Liz had her cerebral haemorrhage. This was my last communication with her.

Then late Tuesday July 5th the Congregation received the devastating news of Liz's cerebral haemorrhage. The doctors said she would not last the night. But she did. She was admitted under the care of Caritas Christi Palliative Care at St Vincents Public Hospital. As Liz hung onto her precious life, Sisters and family rallied around and formed a roster to sit with Liz around the clock. Liz was not going to die alone. She was surrounded by love – Sisters, Mary, Margaret and family. Then Sr Colleen Mills and I visited the afternoon of July 12th. I believe I was sent to give her, on behalf of all the Congregation, permission to go home to God. As her motto encourages:

*'To Jesus through Mary'*



**Sr Jean Marie Brennan rsc**  
(18th June 1935 -26 August 2016)

Liz was a woman of prayer and had a spiritual life that buoyed her on her journey of life. The last paragraph of her personal story reveals this spiritual woman who came to do God's will in her life. She says:

*"When I came to live at Mercy Place, Parkville, Melbourne, I was working with the staff and students at my old school, St Columba's College, Essendon. I had gone full circle. Today I am fully retired and loving being a presence at Mercy Place. I visit the people in high care, meet family members, walk with people to Mass who need help walking to the chapel, singing groups. It means a lot to me and I know it does to others. It is what St Ignatius says: God in all things. This brings God's presence alive in me especially at the moment. I am unable to sit for long owing to back problems so I walk around in the garden, by walking and being in the presence of God you never miss the other. God's presence is always within me."*

Liz has left her mark at Mercy Place and was a friend to many of the Residents there and she will be missed for her genuine love and kindness.

So all that is left now dear Liz is to say thank you for your faithful life and your example of love, and then the hardest word of all, "goodbye".

*There is really no death for those caught up in God, only a moment of passing over, a moment of folding up your tent... we praise a woman who had the vision to let go. We praise a God who had the love to ask her to let go.*

(Macrina Wiederkehr)

**Sr Clare Nolan rsc**  
Congregational Leader

**"This is the Life!"** These were Jean Marie's words at Shellharbour many times as she would sit with a glass of wine, cheese and bickies and the company of good friends at the end of a day of leisure spent walking, swimming, playing Rummy and doing her craft ... Jean loved activity, the company of her many friends, and we all loved her ...

This is the life ... With me here, I have the folder of certificates Jean first told me about twenty years ago. She kept everything which marked the many milestones and attainments of her life. First Communion in 1942, learning to swim 50 metres in 1993, teaching certificate in 1956, school development in 1996, a 'Making Things Happen' course, Deputy Chief of the Brennan clan! There are letters of appreciation from cardinals and bishops and the City of Liverpool as well as certificates attesting to computer, calligraphy and Spanish lessons. Jean was a Justice of the Peace ... and so the list goes on. She was a life-long learner and joiner. If there was anything "on" in the Congregation, Parish, Foundation, her Family or anyone else's family – Jean was there!

The "living, breathing" life of the Jean we all know and love began on 18th June, 1935. Born on her father Jim's birthday and, as Jean has said, named after one of his old girl friends, she was the eldest daughter to Jim and Winifred and was soon joined by her three sisters Fay, Helen and Margot. They attended St Patrick's primary school at Kogarah and secondary school at St Vincent's College Potts Point where they met the Sisters of Charity. Jean went on to gain a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education from Sydney University before beginning her teaching career at Kogarah High School.

The invitation to serve the poor began early in Jean's life – she often commented that when playing with their dolls, hers were always poor and she had to look after them ... an early touch of her life-long commitment to be with and for others that we witnessed so often in Jean's daily life for 55 years as a Sister of Charity.



Jean was a woman of honesty and integrity, faithful to Prayer, Reading and Daily Eucharist and to her ministry in its various forms at different times and places.... Secondary school teaching both for the Department of Education and, after joining the Sisters of Charity in 1959, at Potts Point, Hurstville, and Auburn, then, after studies at the National Pastoral Institute in Melbourne, she was an itinerant religious education advisor in both our Melbourne and Sydney schools and colleges. She took on the role of Principal at St Mary's Star of the Sea, Hurstville from 1981-86.

There followed Special Religious Education at the CCD as classroom teacher and Regional Coordinator in the Liverpool area, and then volunteer ministries of visitation of the poor, Youth Off the Streets, and teaching English to migrants and refugees, both in their homes and through the classes she and Sr Eileen Brown conducted at Liverpool ... a ministry begun in about 1997 and continuing still today, twenty years later where Jean has touched the lives of so many.

Continued page 08

## we remember...

### Sr Jean Marie Brennan rsc

(18th June 1935 - 26 August 2016)

from page 07

Jean was faithful to her many friends from school and university days, ex-students and the many and varied aspects of her ministries, both formal and informal. She loved to meet for coffee or a meal any time and every Sunday after Mass at Liverpool, a group would go for coffee at Westfield to, as Jean put it, *"continue the Eucharist together"*.

The names of her friends are too numerous to mention, but those of us who experienced Jean's care and support are privileged to know who we are!

Jean was rarely idle – visiting, letter writing and doing craft ... What will we do without our steady supply of embroidered hand towels? Or the handmade cards so beautifully inscribed in Jean's distinctive handwriting which would arrive through the post for birthdays, Christmas and to say *"thank you"* for something we had done for her. In the book of certificates, I noted that in 1957 one of Jean's official extra duties at Kogarah High School was to inscribe the certificates and book prizes for the annual prize-giving. Her handwriting did not change through the years.

Life was not always easy for Jean. Her moods had their ups and downs. Sometimes after speaking on the phone we would call in or ring back to console her and find that things had all blown over and everything was sunny again. The last few years were difficult for her as her health began to deteriorate.

Jean was proud of her firsts... in our Congregation she was the first RSC to gain a Bachelor of Divinity in 1982 and the first person ever to graduate from the National Pastoral Institute in Melbourne... literally the first as it was the first year of operation and her surname was at the top of the alphabetical list of graduands!

No doubt there will be many more memories shared over the refreshments in the *Jack Lang* room after mass, which, incidentally is where we gathered to celebrate Jean's Golden Jubilee as a Sister of Charity in 2011. With apologies to Jesus, the closing lines of John's Gospel might be "borrowed" – there are many more things Jean did, which if they were written down, all the books in the world would not be enough to hold them!

One further certificate from the book is an Attestation of Pilgrimage and I quote: By this attestation be it known that Sister Jean M Brennan, RSC, by virtue of fulfilling the Biblical injunction has ascended to Jerusalem, the Holy City, Capital of Israel and is henceforth authorized to bear the title of Jerusalem Pilgrim.

Jean, last Friday your pilgrimage was completed as you attained a place forever in the new and heavenly Jerusalem with the God to whom you have been faithful for 81 years.

*This is the life!*

Sr Libbey Byrne rsc

### Sr Marie Josephine Bourke rsc

(7 February, 1923 - 15th August, 2016)

**Marie Josephine Bourke**, only child of Dominic and Ida Bourke born in Sydney on 7th February 1923. (*"BOURKE"*, Marie often reminded my father, not *"BURKE AND WILLS"*). Marie attended primary and secondary school at St Thomas' School, Lewisham, a classmate to Sr Mark Lehmann and Sr Claudia Doyle, and then to St Mary's Commercial College ... which prepared her for secretarial work. She then took a position at Sacred Heart Hospice.

Sorrow had overshadowed Marie's life earlier; she was just 14 years old, when her father Dominic died ... two years later, at 16, Marie began her novitiate with the Sisters of Charity on 2nd February 1940 ... and on the eve of her clothing as a novice on August 26th of that year, her much loved mother Ida died.

*Marie's motto for religious life encapsulated the sources of where she found her strength, in all that sadness of her early years...for the motto she chose were the words of St Paul: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."*

Marie's motto for religious life ... chosen before her profession on 27th August of that same year at Katoomba ... the wartime placement of the novitiate ... it would seem ... encapsulated the sources of where she found her strength, in all that sadness of her early years ... for the motto she chose were the words of St Paul: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

Marie's early teaching years took her to Auburn, Liverpool, and Concord West as a commercial teacher ...and then to New Norfolk, Hobart and to St Joseph's Orphanage at Sandy Bay. A second six years at Concord West enabled her to link up with students of past years there. Six years at Cabramatta, then to St Anne's Liverpool where she remained for six years ... a 'mother' figure to many disadvantaged children.



She is long remembered as a 'mother' figure to many many children at St Anne's Orphanage. Very shortly after her death, many of those who were then children in the Orphanage, were 'networking' with those with whom they had shared those childhood years together, passing on the news of Marie's death.



A telling testimony to that tender care given years ago, surfaced tangibly a few years ago when Marie celebrated her 90th birthday... the letters of remembrance kept coming to Kensington that day ... fifty years later ... and the tell tale smile of recognition on her face as we read out the names of the senders was a joy to behold.

Marie was loved as a teacher, but her work with Catholic Social Welfare both in Paddington and Sandy Bay was always very dear to her heart. It was apparent to all who shared this work with Marie that this was her particular 'forte'.

She possessed a wisdom born of her own faithfulness and drawn from personal experiences of loss and grief in her own life. The Christ love within Marie, on many occasions touched lives other than the children in care.

Over the years, many a man or woman carrying many different kinds of anxiety, worry, shame or burden, whether brought about by their own choice or victimised by a judgmental society, came confidently to Marie knowing that there they would find a 'listening ear' and a compassionate heart' ... no one was ever disappointed. Marie listened, counselled ... referred them to professional help or took steps through appropriate channels to facilitate the burden being so painfully carried.

Perhaps it was because Marie was an only child, that she had a particular interest in her family history. Whatever the reason, it was significant to her all during her life, but particularly in her later years, when she had more time to explore different avenues that brought her in touch with different branches of her family.

She spoke at length about Camden, and became quite emotional when she was recounting different accounts of the various members and interests of her extended family.

It was fortuitous that when Marie withdrew from active participation with children in care, she was residing in her beloved 'Tassie' where she spent more happy years and continued to be a special 'presence' to many. In 1995, because of failing health and an urgent need for special care, she was brought over to St Joseph's Village, Auburn.

Leaving 'Tassie' cost her dearly, especially as it was so sudden. She would assuredly have been relying on Paul's words "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me". It took her a long time to adjust, but gradually she just lapsed back into her role of being mentor, counsellor, friend to those with whom she lived and those who came to visit her or kept in touch with her by phone. She spent many many happy years at St Joseph's Village.

A procedure to have a partial hip replacement in 2010 was a great setback, and the ordeal of facing continued physiotherapy as a follow up, to enable her to walk again, proved too much. It was then St Joseph's Aged Care became her home in the tender and loving care of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart and their wonderful carers. She loved being there and reiterated that 'love' over and over again in the six years she spent at St Joseph's. It so happened that she had inherited devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart from her mother. After Sr Dorothy Harrison died, Sr Marina asked her if she would like to move back to Auburn...once again quite vehemently she reiterated that she loved being at 'Kensington' and there it was, on Mary's Assumption Day, our Congregational Feast she breathed her last with Sr Pauline and Sr Maureen at her side...

*Come Spouse of Christ...  
Marie Josephine Bourke...  
accept the crown prepared for you  
from the foundation of the world...  
Thank you for WHO you were  
to so many, especially to  
Christ's little ones... the Anawim.*

**Sr Judith Clark rsc**

**Sr Maria Therese Hess rsc**  
(1st November 1926 -20 July 2016)

**On behalf of all Sisters of Charity,  
I welcome you to this Mass of  
Christian Burial for our dearly loved  
sister, Maria Therese.**



It is our time this morning, at this Eucharistic Thanksgiving, to give our thanks to God for Maria's 70 years of life as a faithful and loving Sister of Charity. In these past years at Corpus Christi, Clayton, Maria Therese gave us example of patient waiting for God, and surrendering all into God's hands. She was living example of the power of presence when all else is taken away. That is what Maria Therese became at Corpus Christi, a presence that spoke to others of a Presence greater than ourselves.

God's watchful eye was on Maria in the loving care given to her by the staff at Corpus Christi. She could change lives by simply being who she was and accepting in faith and hope the lot marked out for her by God, to become totally dependent on others. We thank the staff for their care. Maria lived our charism of service of the poor in so many loving and practical ways and Maria Therese lived a life of love following Jesus' command of love to all of us. Over her life Maria Therese grew in her appreciation of her patron saint, the young French saint renowned for her "little way" of love, St Therese of Lisieux. And in that spirit of Jesus' command to love and Therese's exclamation "my vocation is love" she chose as her personal motto the words of St Therese:

*'Love is repaid by love alone.'*

**Sr Clare Nolan rsc**  
Congregational Leader

## Sr Bernadette Mary Culhane rsc

(10 June 1933 - 18th September 2016)

**How sad we are today to be saying goodbye** to this woman who has loved so much and so many and whom we have loved so much – Bernadette Mary Culhane. Fifty eight years a Sister of Charity and fifty eight years of faithful, joyful, loving service. The hallmark of Bernadette's life was kindness and she was kindness personified.

**B**ernadette is survived by her two sisters Cecily and Mary. It was about 9.15pm last Sunday evening at St Vincent's Palliative Care Melbourne that Bernadette heard the words: "Bernadette come home! I have prepared a place for you." And she walked peacefully across the bridge from this life to her new Life with God. Sr Mary Gabrielle Clarke was the one sitting with her as she let go of her life so peacefully.

Bernadette was 22 when she entered the Sisters of Charity in February 1956. She came to the Congregation as a Registered Nurse on completion of her training at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne. The story of how Bernadette came to the Sisters of Charity is best told by herself. She left behind a short story and I would like to share some of it with you.

*"After completing my secondary education with the Presentation Sisters at O'Neill College, Elsternwick I went to St Vincent's Hospital, East Melbourne for my nursing training. During my first year I became friends with a Daughter of Charity, who was also training at St Vincent's.*

*Over much conversation with her over three years I became very interested in their mission. After completing my training I went to a bayside holiday house and surprisingly it was during this time I became aware that I wanted to enter the Sisters of Charity after all, not the Daughters of Charity. This was a painful time, and I shed many tears at night trying to make my decision.*

*On returning from my holiday I met with my Daughter of Charity friend and I still remember the painful experience of handing back to her the six decade rosary beads and prayer book which the*



*Daughters of Charity had already given me as first steps towards entering their Novitiate.*

*When I entered I was given the name Sr Raymond. I asked for this because Sr Raymond taught me art at the College. I was good at art and naturally loved her lessons. I was known as Sr Raymond until the Second Vatican Council allowed us to change back to our Baptismal name... I then became known as Sr Bernadette."*

Bernadette had a very busy but very rich ministry in Catholic Health Care. This took her to each of our Hospitals and Hospices from 1958 up to her retirement in 2013. And she was loved wherever she went. One of her most important legacies to the sick and dying of Brisbane was the setting up of a Hospice in the Home Service. Perhaps the dearest ministry to Bernadette was the care of the down and outs wherever she was sent. In Sydney in Casualty at St Vincent's and likewise in Melbourne and St Joseph's Auburn. It was in Melbourne she made herself available to the Briar Terrace Team.

*"It was a welcoming place" she writes, "for the people living on the streets, rooming houses, gardens, pubs. I would make cups of tea, listen to their stories or just be with them."*

From the short biography in the book Sisters of Charity of Australia 175yrs Bernadette says:

*"As part of the Briar Terrace Team, I regularly visit isolated poor men and women around the Fitzroy area, also sick Sisters of Charity daily in St Vincent's Hospital and Sisters in Aged Care. To comfort grieving relatives, I attend funerals of deceased St Vincent's Hospital Staff and visit their families. It is all part of my wish to support those in need."*

She was able to relate to the poor in a very special way. Was it because the words she chose as her motto were "Dominus Est. It is the Lord!" Bernadette certainly saw God in all the poor and lonely. And she was a great ambassador for the Congregation making sure friends and benefactors were not forgotten. To be able to respond to the spiritual needs of those she cared for Bernadette undertook training in Clinical Pastoral Education. She began Volunteer Training Programs in both Mt Olivet in Qld and Caritas Christi in Kew. She was the link between the poor and the hospital, in her Community Liaison role at St Vincent's Melbourne. I remember when Bernadette was advised not to drive anymore as her memory was failing. This was such a crushing blow to her because it was her lifeline to continuing her ministry of care for others whether they be our Sisters or other people in need of some kind whom she let into her heart.

Speaking of his Seminarians before his election, Pope Francis said he could judge how well the students did in visiting the slums by watching to see how dusty their shoes were when they returned. Bernadette's shoes were constantly dusty from the road and she is someone we would expect to leave this world with her boots on, but God had a different plan.



## Sr Margaret Dwyer rsc

(31 October 1931-31 August 2016)

I read a beautiful modern day parable recently, entitled 'Knitting Squares for the Kingdom Blanket'. Bernadette was a creative woman and tried and succeeded at everything, including knitting squares! If I skip to the end of the parable and the dying person says "Will the Lord accept the square I bring for the Kingdom blanket?"

It is then that it is not going to matter about the mistakes and the spoiled patterns and dropped stitches. What is going to matter is the one crucial question: "Does it help to keep people warm?" Which will be valued more: a blanket full of faults and holes, to keep them warm, or the perfect masterpiece that you never made?

Bernadette certainly kept people warm by wrapping them in her loving, kind ways and her contribution to the Kingdom Blanket would only be known by God.

Let us let Bernadette have the final word from the piece she wrote fairly recently. Referring to herself she wrote:

*"Today, it is me that is in need, as I am losing my memory. I am scared of what the future will be for me but I have the precious memories of my life's journey, people I have lived with and have come to love. I am very grateful to God for the richness of my life."*

Let us go now into our Eucharist of Thanksgiving and join with Bernadette in giving thanks for a life well lived in the service of others.

*Kingdom Blanket* from *Inner Compass* by Margaret Silf.

Sr Clare Nolan rsc  
Congregational Leader

**Good morning!** What a very sad day it is today to say goodbye to our dear Sister, Margaret Therese Dwyer. A much loved and respected Sister of Charity for 64 yrs. I am here this morning representing all Sisters of Charity. We stand with Margaret's sister Mary, her brother Fr Bill SJ (in India), her Sister in-law Betty and all Margaret's family as they mourn another loss so soon after farewelling Sr Elizabeth from this same Church. We stand with Fr Bill Attard PP of St Therese's and Margaret's Parish family who loved Margaret and valued her presence amongst them. Today we honour Margaret's life and death and give thanks to God for her through our Eucharist of Thanksgiving.

When asked following diagnosis of Motor Neuron Disease "how are you Margaret?" you would often hear the response "I am on a journey!" And it was the specific journey expressed by the Psalmist in Psalm 15 that touched Margaret "the journey marked out for me (by God) is my delight." As far back as the Middle Ages, the prevailing world view was, that death like life, is a pilgrimage, and Margaret lived that mantra to the end, always trusting, that her "God and her all" would never leave her. Her journey led her home to God.

Margaret's faith-life began and ended in this Church where we gather. She was an *Essendon-ite* through and through. It is so fitting that Margaret and Elizabeth could go home to God from St Therese's. One of Margaret's last conversations was with our Sister Judith Christy and it was about the footie, her Essendon team and the top eight.

When Margaret entered the Sisters of Charity in February 1950 she had been a student teacher here at St Therese's and she remained a passionate teacher through all her years of dedication in her teaching ministry as a Sister of Charity. She taught Primary and Secondary. In 1964 she came home to Essendon (St Columba's) and eventually Margaret became Principal. She worked in the Catholic Education Office till 1978. Following her time there Margaret studied overseas and added to her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees perhaps the most treasured of all her degrees, her Masters in Sacred Theology. Her thesis was entitled 'Personality and Prayer.'



From there her sacred ministry in Spiritual Direction took prominence in her life and I am sure many of her directees are here today to thank God for the gift of Margaret's wisdom on their journey. Margaret began the Currajeen Retreat House at Doreen where people could come and nourish their spiritual lives. In 2008 Margaret was asked to be the Vicar for Consecrated Life in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Margaret fulfilled this role magnificently for 6 years. She was also responsible for establishing our Sisters of Charity Companions and guided the group for many years. Always sharing her talents with others for the greater glory of God. Margaret was faithful to our Ignatian heritage and taught others its value on the spiritual journey.

Continued page 12

# we remember...

**Sr Margaret Dwyer rsc**

(31 October 1931-31 August 2016)

from page 11

Margaret has made a tremendous contribution through her work and publications in understanding the human personality and how we pray as individuals. Amidst all these achievements Margaret found time for exercising her creative side. She loved gardening, she painted silk scarves, she was an upholsterer, decorated candles, crocheting and knitting, played cards seriously, and met with groups of friends on a regular basis and loved to cook – to name but a few.

As I read all the tributes that came in or had conversations with people who knew Margaret I exclaimed *“What a giant of a woman!”*

This giant of a woman now had to face something that would require the greatest of courage – to hear those dreaded words *“you have Motor Neurone Disease.”* It was a shocking thing to hear for Margaret and all of us.

Margaret had a very compassionate and gently spoken Specialist in Dr Lauren and very soon she had a team around her working together to make this final journey as comfortable as possible. We are grateful to Dr Lauren, her GP, Dr John Pattison, all the staff at Arcadia Aged Care Essendon, Liz Reid our Health Care CoOrdinator, the staff at Caritas Christi Hospice Kew, Margaret’s family and our own Sisters who wrapped her in love and care all along the way.

Margaret accepted her diagnosis with grace and remained at peace.

St Paul said:

*“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”*

2 Cor 4:16

Margaret began to withdraw further and further into that inner self where she and God were one. I think I got to know Margaret in her dying and death and I am grateful for her example of dying with grace and trust and courage.

We have received many beautiful tributes and testaments of who Margaret has been in people’s lives and how grateful they are for what she taught them and how warm and loving but also challenging and supportive she was with them. One tribute said:

*“What a valiant and wonderful woman she was! Margaret lived the Gospel in the everyday and brought the face of Jesus to the lives of those she encountered...”*

There is a beautiful story told by the writer Henri Nouwen which contains an image of dying that so described Margaret’s leaving us that I wish to share with you this morning.

After attending a circus with his friends and seeing *The Flying Rodleighs* trapeze act and feeling in awe of them flying through the air, flying and catching like elegant dancers it led Henri to ask Rodleigh about flying. Rodleigh said: *“I must have complete trust in my catcher. The catcher is the real star of the show not the flyer. He has to be there for me with split second precision and grab me out of the air as I come to him in the long jump.”*

Henri asked, *“How does that work?”* Rodleigh replied: *“The secret is the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything. A flyer must fly and a catcher must catch. When I fly to my catcher I simply have to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me and pull me safely over.”*

Henri was amazed that the flyer does nothing and learned that the worst thing the flyer can do is try to catch the catcher. He continued *“a flyer must fly and a catcher must catch and the flyer must trust with outstretched arms that his catcher will be there for him.”*

Henri then reflects on Jesus’ words: *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”*

Dying is trusting in the catcher and to care for a dying one is to say: *“Don’t be afraid. Remember that you are the beloved child of God. God will be there when you make your long jump. Don’t try to grab him, he will grab you. Just stretch out your arms and hands and trust, trust, trust.”*

And after holding Claire’s new baby Archie Allen in her weak and trembling arms on the Tuesday she was free to fly home to God early Wednesday morning with her arms outstretched and full of trust. All was accomplished. The journey came to its destination home safely to God.

Rest in peace dear Margaret. You will be missed by many but you live on in the legacy of love you shared.

(Story from: *The One Thing Necessary* by Henri Nouwen)

**Sr Clare Nolan rsc**  
Congregational Leader



**Keep in touch** is a quarterly newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families, friends and supporters.

Published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia

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