



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Keep in Touch

KIT
MAGAZINE

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Inside this month

Welcome to the September 2020 edition of *Keep in Touch*, where the mood is one of mixed feelings in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, we celebrate with joy and love Sr Amanda Nguyen, who made her vows of perpetual profession in August, and we look back at how the Sisters of Charity responded to a call to a health ministry 100 years ago in Queensland.

This month, *KIT* also celebrates the life of one of the Congregation's most respected educators and leaders, Mother Frances McGuigan.



A new normal, and a new way to do things

COVID-19 continues to impact our lives as we find ourselves adjusting to this COVID-19 world.

Every aspect of our society feels its blow and our hearts go out to the poor and the disadvantaged, and families and businesses who struggle to make ends meet, as well as to the carers of those suffering the virus and all those on the frontline.

May we walk in peace with each person who comes our way.

In his message for World Mission Sunday on October 18, Pope Francis has said:

"Despite the suffering and challenges posed by COVID-19, the Church's missionary journey continues. The mission that God entrusts to each one of us leads us from fear and introspection to a renewed realisation that we find ourselves precisely when we give ourselves to others."

I am thinking particularly of this at this time.

August 15 being the Congregational Feast of the Sisters of Charity, on that day we celebrate Mary in our lives and through her intercession we pray for the Congregation.

Above: Sr Amanda Nguyen signs her vows, with the Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan. Photography by Tim Bauer

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A new normal, and a new way to do things

From page 1

On that date this year, we rejoiced with Sr Amanda Nguyen when she made her vows of Perpetual Profession as a Sister of Charity in St Ambrose's Church, Concord West in Sydney. You will find the Mass on YouTube and photos page 4.

The coronavirus restrictions limited the number attending but many people – including Amanda's family and Sisters of Charity in Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and NSW – were able to take part through live streaming. It was truly a joyous occasion.

Technology was also a boon for the annual staff event, The Twilight Gathering, during which our lay staff members receive input for their formation and growth in our charism. Along with the staff, those who advise the Sisters through our Boards and Committees also attend.

The gathering is usually an afternoon and evening with guest speakers followed by dinner together. This year the event was virtual, held on Zoom, with the Congregational Leader, Councillors and staff.

We celebrated the 162nd anniversary of our Foundress' death on July 22. Our Founding Congregation, The Religious Sisters of Charity, brought together Sisters of Charity, companions and friends from the UK, the USA, east and west Africa, and Australia – which was live streamed here in Australia at 5:30am on July 23rd and was available on our online portal.

The Pope constantly calls on us to: "Pray for the grace to hear the cries of the poor: the stifled cry of the unborn, of starving children, of young people more used to the explosion of bombs than happy shouts of the playground.

In this edition of *Keep In Touch*, we look at the stories of Sisters who have done just that – Mother Francis McGuigan, and the Sisters who went to the Darling Downs in Queensland to set up what is now St Vincent's Private Hospital, Toowoomba; we farewelled in death two of our Sisters, Sr Rose Anne Croke in May and Sr Virginia Wilkinson in June; and celebrate the 60th anniversary of profession of four Sisters, Kerry Barras, Jeannie Johnston, Frances Graham, and Anne Turner.

As we continue to navigate these times of corona virus, please be assured that the Sisters of Charity of Australia value your support.

May you and your families keep safe and well. You will find love and inspiration on the pages of this *KIT*.

Sr Clare Nolan
Congregational Leader

Sr Amanda: Her "Yes" to perpetual profession

Sr Libbey Byrne gave the reflection at the liturgy celebrating Sr Amanda Nguyen making her vows of perpetual profession as a Sister of Charity of Australia on the Congregation's patronal feast, the Feast of the Assumption (August 15) at St Ambrose's Church, West Concord in Sydney. She began: "No, no, no, no, no.... YES..."

Do you remember this famous line from Jim Trott, one of the parish council members in the TV series, *The Vicar of Dibley*?

During the past twenty years, it has become part of the vernacular for many. "No" is often the first word learned by children as they

become aware of themselves as separate beings and, like Jim, it can take some time and a few tantrums for the "no" to grow into a "yes."

Sometimes we say yes to please others, like the son in Matthew's Gospel who told his father he would go and work in the vineyard,

when he had no intention of going. At other times, our initial "yes" can lead us into circumstances which make us wonder just what we've got ourselves into, how we will survive or if it is possible to extricate ourselves from somewhere we would rather not go.

Sr Amanda: Her “Yes” to perpetual profession

From page 3



From top left:

Srs Amanda and Clare
 Sr Amanda and Fr Isaac
 Sr Mary Frances Gould
 St Ambrose's Church
 Sr Margaret Beirne
 Srs Mary Frances Gould,
 Annette Cunliffe, and a guest,
 with Sr Amanda
 The Congregation in
 St Ambrose's, Fr Brian Egan,
 Srs Adele Cottrell-Dormer,
 Amanda, Clare, and Fr Isaac

through our four vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and service of the poor, not with the intention of making herself less free, but rather, as Sandra Schneiders writes:

"I commit my whole self, everything and forever, to the undying love that has claimed me for the transformation of the world."

Amanda, through your yes, the love of Christ continues to be brought forth to all the corners of our universe and our wishes for you are summed up in these words from Sr Cathy Sherman csj:

"May the greatest love the world has ever known, seize you, inspire, set your heart on fire, and dare you to be bold, with wisdom to be told."

"May the neighbourhood of our sacred universe be carried and treasured, embraced inside of you, that all may be one for a future yet to come."

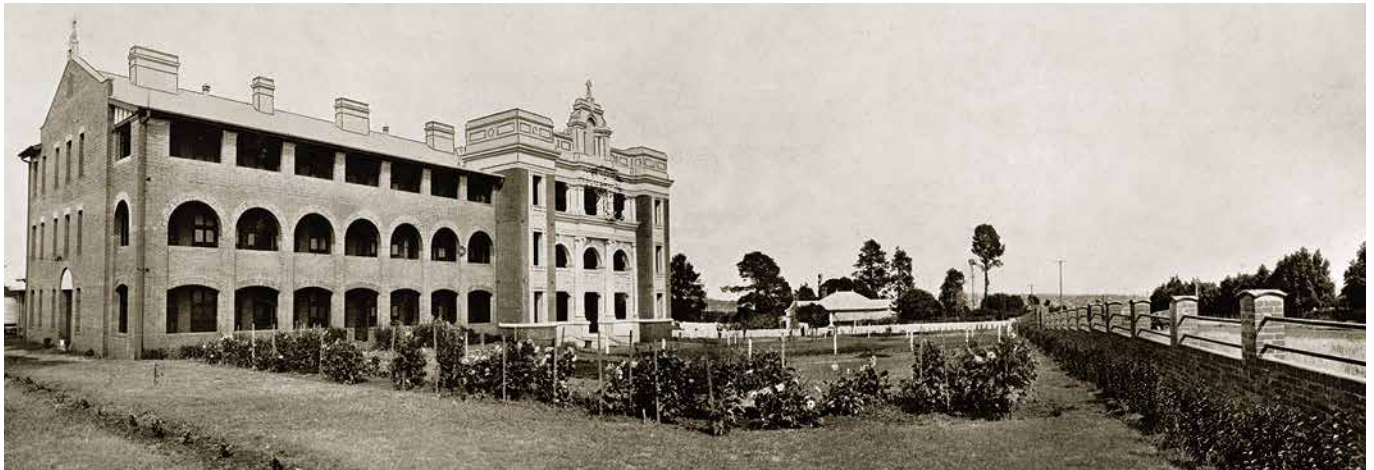
This we ask, this we pray, as we bless you this day.



To watch Sr Amanda make her vows of perpetual profession, please go to the Sisters of Charity YouTube platform: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysk1lnUDHjI>

The Sisters celebrate 100 years on the Darling Downs

In 1920, the Sisters of Charity of Australia established a community in Toowoomba with the one goal in mind: To build a hospital for the community.



The original hospital the Sisters built, c.1922-23

Overcoming extraordinary challenges, the Sisters initiated a fundraising campaign and purchased a 1.6 hectare (four acres) estate facing Herries and Mackenzie Streets.

It was a community effort – inclusion was a part of the story of this hospital from the very beginning. The initial building fundraiser appealed to the entire community “regardless of creed and nationality.” People from all walks of life contributed to the building of the hospital.

On May 22, 1921, almost a year to the day after the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Toowoomba, the Foundation Stone was laid and blessed by Archbishop James Duhig from Brisbane.



Above: Sisters in the field
The original site the Sisters bought in Toowoomba



The building phase did not continue without its own challenges. Half-way through the build it was realised that there was not enough money for it to be completed. Sister Mary Bruton, the first Superior of the hospital, was recalled to Sydney and there was very real doubt that the dream would become a reality.

St Vincent's Toowoomba, which has been a cherished part of the community of the Darling Downs, very nearly did not happen.

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The Sisters celebrate 100 years on the Darling Downs

From page 5



But ... The Archbishop of Brisbane and architects pleaded that the building continue, and Sister Mary Bruton returned to Toowoomba to continue her fundraising work at a local level.

It is interesting to note the workers on the very first building site made donations to the Toowoomba St Vincent's Building fund. On November 19, 1922 St Vincent's Hospital Toowoomba was officially opened with a gala ball and huge community gathering.

Mary Aikenhead Ministries, through St Vincent's Health Australia, is proud to continue this legacy built by Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity.

Mary Aikenhead would be delighted to see what her ministry has become up on the Downs, where the Sisters and the staff have for a century been in touch with so many people and made such a difference to their lives. Members of the Congregation, including Srs Kathleen Doohan, Regina Millard, Marie Haran, and Anthea Groves, as well as many others – and the current Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan – ministered here.

They all have such fond memories of the patients, their families, the administrators, the nursing staff, the doctors, and the people of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs.

The local community was, from the very beginning, so supportive of the hospital, to which people came from everywhere for a broad spectrum of health care.

On Mary Aikenhead's feast day, July 22, the local community celebrated again, with a liturgy to celebrate the Sisters who had ministered at the hospital during the past 100 years.

As part of the celebrations, the Sisters' graves were refurbished, and a plaque honouring them unveiled.

Following the grave side service, a group of Sisters and supporters went to Emerge, a local Social Enterprise supporting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. As part of the St Vincent's Private Hospital Toowoomba's Preferential Option for the Poor, \$10,000 was donated in June towards purchasing a car so that young people are able to attend their programmes.



Clockwise from top, left:
 St Vincent's Hospital, Toowoomba. 1922
 St Vincent's Private now
 The new plaque in the Sisters' cemetery in Toowoomba
 At the dedication of the new plaque, guests and (right) Sr Suzette Clark

Mother Francis McGuigan – A pioneer in education

Recently, the Congregational Archives received a request for a short biography to be written about Mother M. Francis McGuigan and her contribution to Australian Catholic Education.

Mother M. Francis was selected amongst several potential candidates, not only for her direct contribution in the classroom, but for her successful leadership as Superior General in expanding the teaching and nursing apostolates of the Congregation far beyond Sydney.

This biography below will appear in *Australian Catholic Educators 1820-2020*, a forthcoming publication from Coventry Press as part of the *Biographical Dictionary of Australian Catholic Educators*, celebrating the first 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia.

Mother Mary Francis McGuigan was a gifted Catholic educator and skilful administrator. She was elected as the first Australian-born Superior General of the Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia in 1882 and remained in this position until 1920. Under her leadership, the Congregation grew exponentially, from 44 to more than 400 members, allowing the order to expand its teaching and nursing apostolates in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

Bridget Mary Magdalen McGuigan (1842-1923), known in religious life as Sister (later Mother) Mary Francis McGuigan, was born on January 16, 1842 at Braidwood, in New South Wales. She was the second of 10 daughters born to John McGuigan, a pioneering pastoralist



Sr M. Francis McGuigan, ca 1877

of the Monaro District and his wife Ellen McGuigan, née Foran. Pious Catholics, the McGuigans often hosted the visiting district priest who used the family home at Norongo as a "station" for the celebration of Mass.¹

In 1856, Bridget and her older sister Mary were sent as boarders to be educated by the Benedictine Sisters at the Convent of the Presentation of the Virgin, Subiaco, Rydalmere. At Subiaco, Bridget encountered Sister Mary Alphonsus Unsworth, a Sister of Charity who was convalescing there; she later influenced Bridget's decision to join the Order.²

On July 22, 1861 Bridget McGuigan entered the Sisters of Charity at St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point,

and was professed on April 21, 1864 taking the religious name of Sr Mary Francis.

During her novitiate, Sr M. Francis was sent to train and teach at St Vincent's Primary School (Victoria Street Roman Catholic School), then under the management of its two founding teachers, Sr M. Aloysius Raymond (headmistress) and Sr M. Alphonsus Unsworth (infants mistress). Her aptitude for teaching was quickly recognised and she was appointed as the first assistant to Sr M. Aloysius.³

In 1865, she became headmistress of St Vincent's School (following the withdrawal of Sr M. Aloysius due to ill health), continuing in this role until 1881. She maintained the school at a high standard, ensuring ongoing recognition and financial support from the Council of Education.⁴

1 Sr Mary Teresa Joseph Roper, *Short Sketch of the Life of Mary Francis McGuigan: Superior General of the Sisters of Charity of Australia*, 1923, SER/01710/008, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity, 8.

2 Roper, 12.

3 "Festival of Memories," *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney, NSW), April 16, 1914, 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article111292801>

4 Roper, 31; Margaret M. Donovan, *Apostolate of Love: Mary Aikenhead 1787-1858 Foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity* (Melbourne: The Polding Press, 1979), 234-237; Samantha Frappell, *St Vincent's College Potts Point 1858-2008: 150 Years of Catholic Education* (Sydney: Kingsclear Books, 2009), 4-9.

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Mother Francis McGuigan – A pioneer in education

From page 7



Mother M. Francis McGuigan (fourth from left) with a group of Sisters, St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point, NSW, ca 1909

At the 1882 General Chapter, Sr M. Francis McGuigan was elected Superior General of the Sisters of Charity. Her election coincided with the removal of State Aid funding from non-government schools in New South Wales, which threatened to undermine the work of the Sisters in their schools.

Mother M. Francis, responding to the call of Archbishop Roger Vaughan and aided by several junior Sisters who had trained and worked as teachers prior to entering the Congregation⁵ staffed six parochial schools in addition to the five schools already under the Sisters' care. This was made possible through the financial support provided by the opening of St Vincent's Ladies College, a fee-paying boarding and day school at Potts Point in 1882.⁶

This new college incorporated the old St Vincent's Primary School and offered both junior and senior schooling. During the following

36 years, more than 20 Schools were staffed or established by the Sisters across Sydney and as far away as Bega and Bombala. Of note were the Garcia School of Music and St Vincent's Training College, a college for female primary school teachers, both established in 1896 at Potts Point.

The contribution of Mother M. Francis McGuigan and the Sisters of Charity to Catholic education in Australia, was, however, not confined to a single State. In 1889, five Sisters were sent to Melbourne, in response to a request made in 1888 by Archbishop Thomas Carr for the assistance of the Sisters in supporting Catholic schools in inner city Melbourne and for the establishment of a hospital.⁷

The Sisters undertook the staffing of St Patrick's School, East Melbourne, and during the next 13 years staffed a further six parochial schools and established two senior schools. The success of the Sisters in providing a sound Catholic education to their students resulted in further requests made to Mother M. Francis. In 1889, she

noted in her diary that she had to deny an appeal from Bishop Higgins of Rockhampton who had requested eight Sisters to educate up to 1000 children, as "the Sisters could not be spared ... and the expense is great".⁸

She also received appeals from Melbourne and New Zealand for foundations, but again Mother M. Francis declined.⁹ These decisions were made in the context of negotiations, begun in 1888 for the amalgamation of the Hobart community of Sisters (separate from 1847) with those on the mainland which was achieved in 1890.¹⁰



Tall with an expressive countenance and stately deportment, Mother M. Francis radiated a strong presence both as a junior Sister and as Superior General.¹¹ Her authority was firm but gentle, guided by her strong sense of piety and justice.

5 Roper, 32-33; Donovan, 237.

6 Roper, 39; Rescript, "Granting the petition of the Sisters of Charity to accept fees and to conduct boarding Schools. Given at Rome by Pope Leo XIII, 4 December 1879," 31 January 1880, SER/01720/002, A104/11, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity.

7 Mother Mary Francis McGuigan, *Diary*, 1888, SER/01674/011, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity, Roper, 44.

8 McGuigan, *Diary*, 16 September 1899.

9 McGuigan, *Diary*, February 7, 1895, July 1904, April 1905, SER/01674/011.

10 Donovan, 240-241; Josephine Cannell, *To the Beckoning Shores: Urged on by the Love of Christ* (Hobart: N.P., 2007), 47-48.

11 Roper, 13.

In 1914, she celebrated her Golden Jubilee, the first Australian born Sister of Charity to do so, before being succeeded in 1920 by Mother M. Berchmans Daly.

After a short retirement, she died of heart complications on October 27, 1923¹² and was laid to rest in

the Lady Chapel of St Vincent's Chapel, Potts Point. At her funeral, Archbishop Kelly noted in relation to Mother M. Francis McGuigan's leadership that, "The small seed sown in far-off days by the pioneer sisters of charity [sic], was under her guidance to grow and flourish."¹³

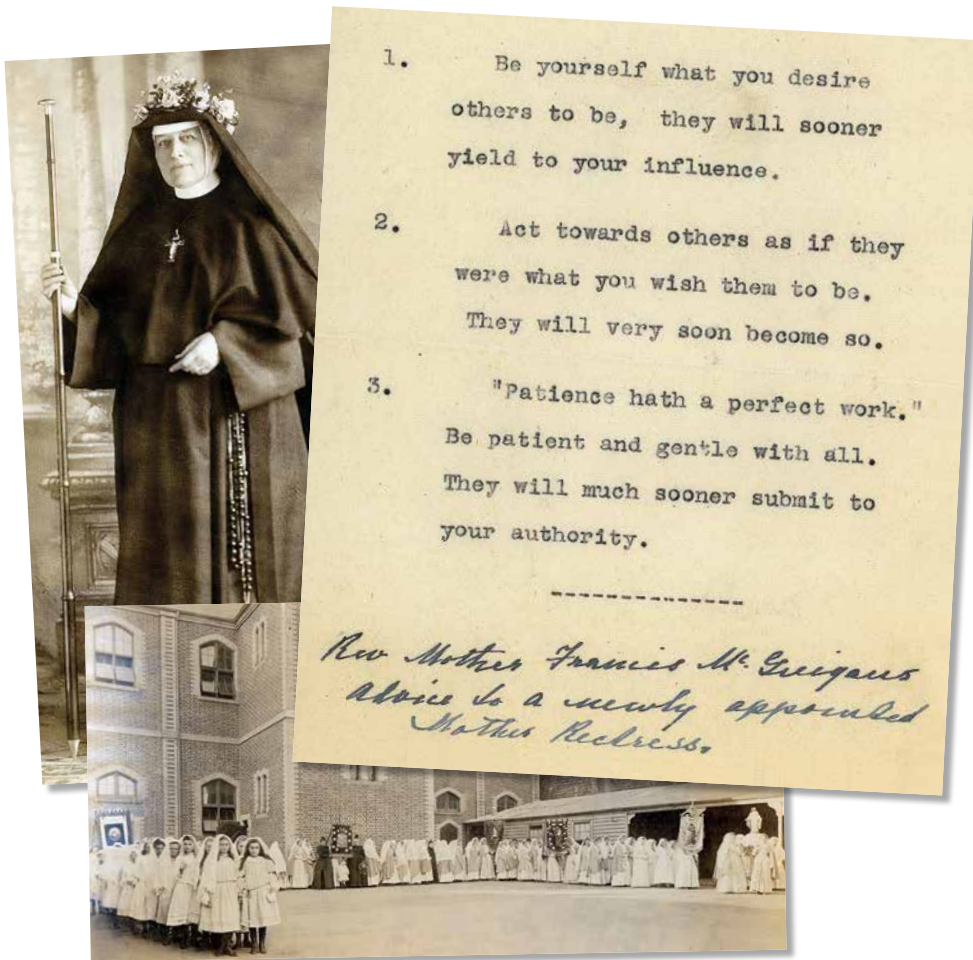
Mother M. Francis McGuigan oversaw and guided the Sisters of Charity through a period of great change and growth. Despite being constrained by limited resources, further divided between the teaching and nursing apostolates, she was able to establish and staff schools and hospitals throughout New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

She denied requests for further foundations which might overextend the Congregation, instead focussing on those already under her care. Mother M. Francis McGuigan played a significant role in supporting Catholic education in Australia both as teacher and as an administrator. This, however, was only possible owing to the support and work of the many unsung Sisters of the Congregation.

Clockwise from left: Mother M Francis McGuigan on her Golden Jubilee Day, The Crown Studio, Sydney, NSW, ca 1914
Three pieces of advice given by Mother M Francis McGuigan to a newly appointed Rectress, ca 1900
Children of Mary, St Patrick's School, Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, VIC, 1893

¹² Roper, 126.

¹³ *Mother Mary Francis McGuigan Dead: Solemn Requiem Mass, The Catholic Press* (Sydney, NSW), November 1, 1923, 20, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article106414201>



1. Be yourself what you desire others to be, they will sooner yield to your influence.
2. Act towards others as if they were what you wish them to be. They will very soon become so.
3. "Patience hath a perfect work." Be patient and gentle with all. They will much sooner submit to your authority.

New Mother Francis M. McGuigan's advice to a newly appointed Mother Rectress.

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Granting the petition of the Sisters of Charity to accept fees and to conduct boarding Schools. Given at Rome by Pope Leo XIII, 4 December 1879, 31 January 1880, SER/01720/002, A104/11, Congregational Archives of the Sisters of Charity.

Congratulations to our Jubilarians!

Platinum Jubilees of Religious Profession of Srs Anne Turner, Francis Graham, Jeannie Johnston and Kerry Barrass

All the tributes in this section have been written by the Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan.

Sr Anne Turner

August 17, 2020

Motto: *"Seeing me, may they recognise Thee"*

Your life began in Tasmania as a teacher and in 1958 you entered the Sisters of Charity and following your Profession you continued in the ministry of Education. You qualified yourself to meet education needs. You had great respect for young women and prepared them well for the challenges of the times before them.

A lot has passed, Anne, since 1958 but I see you as carrier of a very precious gift to others – the carrier of our charism and our story in Tasmania. I am so proud of how you do that and how you get involved.

You are always there for anything Congregational on the mainland and you are always graciously joyful in greeting your Sisters.

In 1993 your ministry at Liverpool changed to Library Assistant and from there back "home" to Tasmania as Library Assistant – but I know it was and has been so much more.

The religious, priests, and people respect and value your presence in sharing the Gospel in Tasmania. You are alone but not isolated.

On your profession day, you chose a personal motto *"Seeing me, may they recognise Thee."* I think the Congregation would offer a resounding yes to that.



Above: Sr Anne Turner, Hobart, TAS, ca 1960
 Sr Agnes Morgan (Irish RSC), Sr Josephine Cannell, Sr Mary McKeon (Irish RSC), Sr Anne Turner, Royal Botanic Gardens, Hobart, TAS, ca 2013
 Sr Anne Turner (fifth from left) with seven Sisters, Hobart, TAS, ca 2004

You are loved and appreciated!

Pope Francis says to us:

Do not be sad men and women. A Christian can never be sad! Our joy springs from our having encountered Jesus Christ!

Gospel joy! That is what we celebrate with you today.

Sr Francis Graham

August 17, 2020

Motto: *"The servant is not greater than his master"*

As I reflected on your life and ministry as a Sister of Charity, I saw a generous woman totally dedicated to the education of young children.

Your first appointment was St Mary's Hurstville in 1961 and those children were your joy and delight over many years. They have given you life and you have given them heaps of love. In 1988, you had some time of





Renewal and returned to the Western Suburbs of Sydney Sacred Heart Cabramatta. You became Library Assistant there offering Pastoral Care to Parish, School and all who needed a listening ear.

Your roots were well and truly down in the Western Suburbs of Sydney – a place of great need where your gentleness and kindness were most needed. Your total devotion to the Liverpool school community is wonderful.



And in the words of Mary Aikenhead: "May you keep your lamp ever filled and ready lighted. Humility must be the vessel; charity the spark."

And Pope Francis: "We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness." (EG42)



From left: Sr Monette Mason and Sr Frances Graham, St Vincent's College, Potts Point, NSW, 2000
(L-R) Sr Eileen Browne, Sr Mathilde Harnischfeger and Sr Frances Graham, St Mary's Primary School, Liverpool, NSW, 1984
Sr Frances Graham, St Mary's Convent, Liverpool, NSW, 1989



Clockwise from above, left: Sr Jeannie Johnston (front row, right) with six Sisters celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Mt St Michael's Convent, Ashgrove, 1 June 1985
Sr Jeannie Johnston and Sr Patricia Lynch, Mt St Michael's Convent, Ashgrove, QLD, 1985
Sr Jeannie Johnston (front row, centre left) with ten Sisters, Mt Carmel Convent, Sandy Bay, TAS, 1970

Sr Jeannie Johnston
August 17, 2020

Motto: "Take Lord, receive"

As I reflect on your life in ministry, I see a gifted, creative woman religious who is also an historian, educator, liturgist, author, so blessed by God with many talents to share. You have an extraordinary memory for so many things.

You are a well of information to tap into. You immersed yourself in the education ministry down the east coast even as far as Townsville and Toowoomba. You were alive with passing on knowledge.

The girls you taught were blessed by you. You are a great storyteller, especially stories of Mary Aikenhead and our Charism.

Among your greatest gifts is preparing and celebrating liturgy, and the Word of God. You took as your personal motto on your Profession day "Take Lord, receive."

And what a great way to celebrate this time in your life by producing the story of one of Mary Aikenhead's most iconic sayings "Being Extensively Useful in the service of the poor" as lived by the rural community of Downs West.

Your life reflects the words of Pope Francis about the poor: "Move forward each day with our eyes fixed on what does not pass away: The Lord and our neighbour."

I rejoice with you, Jeannie, and give thanks to God for your 60 years.

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Congratulations to our Jubilarians!

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Sr Kerry Barrass
August 17, 2020

Motto: *"To love You, Jesu, and to make you loved."*



On your profession day you were given a blank sheet with only these words on it - *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* - go Kerry and do likewise with the gifts God has already given you.

As I reflected on your life and ministry what came to me first was your practical care of the 'strugglers'. It didn't matter who they were - priest, bishop, parishioners, aged care workers or families in distress, if you felt you could do something you were there...

Your hospitality is extraordinary and first on the list is keeping sisters in touch through a monthly get together. You are definitely a people person and your care extends far and wide. Your care of those in rural areas lights up many a smile when you come bearing gifts... And the Shellharbour Parish is blessed to have your ministry there which includes doing home visitation, care of priests and Parish and care of those in Nursing Homes.



You chose for your personal motto on this day 60 years ago: *"To love You, Jesu, and to make you loved."*

You have done this Kerry and I am so proud of you. I think that blank page you were given 60 years ago is getting very full!

I conclude with these words of Pope Francis: "Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ." (EG 49). Just like your motto.

And of Mary Aikenhead with those words we have heard so often: "We require more hands, but these should have heads and more than all, hearts as single as to seek God alone."

Clockwise from left:

- Sr Kerry Anne Barrass, Mt St Mary's Convent, Leura, NSW, 1980
- Sr Kerry Anne Barrass (back row, sixth from left) with nine Sisters at Sacred Heart Convent, NSW, 1970
- Sr Kerry Anne Barrass (back row, second from left) at the end of year mass with OLSH Sisters, Mt St Mary's Convent, Leura, NSW, December 1981
- Sr Angela Burke, Sr Karan Varker and Sr Kerry Anne Barrass, Shellharbour, NSW, 1979

Words of remembrance

Sr M. Virginia (Marie) Wilkinson rsc

December 21, 1930 – June 1, 2020

Mary Mother of Mercy Chapel,
Rookwood Cemetery, NSW,
June 9, 2020

Her personal motto:

**“O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
I place my trust in You.”**



“This is how everyone will recognise that you are my disciples when they see the love you have for one another.” John 14:35

“To love another person is to see the face of God.”
(Victor Hugo, Les Misérables)

It is difficult to put words around love, but it is clearer when you see it and feel it. Virginia’s life that we celebrate this morning was about love. It was visible in her and through her and she was continually giving her love away!

Virginia was Professed on August 27, 1949 and she loved her life as a Sister of Charity. She embraced it

in faithfulness to God’s call and in her whole-hearted service of others. I share with you this morning the aspects of Virginia’s life of loving, that stood out and endeared her to us all.

Virginia was a great communicator and had the ability to engage with you with ease. She gave companionship and an empathetic attentiveness when a person was troubled or anxious.

She was able to show tenderness in her genuine openness to others, for love. It was never, ever about Virginia. It was always about you.



Two outstanding gifts Virginia had were generosity and kindness. She loved giving and helping out, making a phone call, writing that note or paying you a visit.

She was a prolific reader of many genres and could engage with you on topics of modern history, politics, popular music of the 30’s and 40’s, movies and what local Councils

should be doing. She read the newspaper every day from cover to cover which kept her in touch with the needs of the world. The crossword was done by day’s end.

Virginia loved her ministry in education and was in primary schools for over 40 years and Principal 25 of those years ministering in Victoria, Tasmania, and NSW.



She was committed to seeing pupils not only achieve academically but she saw that the whole person was nurtured. She fostered local community involvement and the desire to share their gifts and talents. She loved her Staff and encouraged their ongoing formation, their openness and creativity and openness to change when necessary.

Clockwise from above, left:

Sr Virginia Wilkinson
Sr Virginia with students on Street Retreat
(L-R) Sr Virginia Wilkinson,
Sr Mary Maguire, Sr Carmel and Sr
Margaret Fitzgerald, Shellharbour
Convent, NSW, 1971
Sr Virginia and Sr Deirdre Hickey (second
from left) with students on Street Retreat

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Words of remembrance

Sr M. Virginia (Marie) Wilkinson rsc

From page 13



Clockwise from above, left:

(L-R) Sr Margaret Dwyer and Sr Virginia Wilkinson, Sacred Heart Convent, Cabramatta, NSW, 1954

(L-R) Sr Virginia Mahony and Sr Virginia Wilkinson, St John's Primary School, Auburn, NSW, ca 1981

(L-R) Sr Maureen Heffernan and Sr Virginia Wilkinson, Kingston Beach, TAS, 1970

Sr Virginia Wilkinson, St Mary's Convent, Paddington, NSW, ca 2004

Virginia's love of family was well known. We knew when anyone had a cold, we knew every step of your growing up, we knew about your girlfriends and boyfriends, what you delighted in and what your struggles were. She knew you loved her. She loved you and was proud of you.

She loved the Christian Brothers. The Brothers in their School at Lewisham became her friends, colleagues, helpers and advisors. Twelve years on she entered their lives again in the role of "Teaching Support" at St Mary's Cathedral School and remained there for thirteen years. They were some of the happiest years Virginia experienced in her lifetime.

Love of the Sisters, some of whom have known her for the 73 years of

her Religious Life, others at various periods of her journey. She touched us with her grateful and tender heart, her humour, hospitality and loyalty, her sense of justice and her quiet contemplative soul.

The final words. Virginia loved Parish life. Her daily prayer of thanksgiving at the Eucharist. She was so grateful to you, Fr Paul, for your presence and involvement for her 70th Jubilee. It was a beautiful day where love was brimming over. Her God had blest her abundantly.

Life is very short, and we are no sooner here than it is time to depart again. We don't realise the good we can do. A kind, encouraging word or a helping hand can bring many a person through dark valleys in their lives. We were sent here to search for the light of Easter

in our hearts and when we find it we are meant to give it away generously. Virginia has lived her life this way.

Her personal motto chosen for her Profession day was: *"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You."*

And that she did. The Sacred Heart was her symbol of love. Virginia's life began in love and ended on Monday June 1, sleeping into her death, peacefully. She has entered Eternal Life in love.

As I began, her life was all about love.

"Love, love changes everything, how you live and how you die ... love will never ever let you be the same."
(Andrew Lloyd Webber)

Rest peacefully now in the arms of everlasting love.

-- Deirdre Hickey rsc

Sr Rose Anne Croke rsc

March 23, 1920 – May 20, 2020

St John of God Church,
Auburn NSW. May 28, 2020

Her personal motto:

**“Father, not my will
but thine be done.”**

Rose Anne entered the Sisters of Charity when she was thirty years of age. What would have motivated a young woman who was a trained and experienced clerical stenographer, with a good job, to decide to enter religious life?

It's true that she had been a member of the Theresian Club for some years. This was a group of Catholic lay women whose founder was a Sister of Charity, Sr Mary Therese. Their Constitution served as a handbook for their spiritual lives. Their main ministry was preparation of children to receive the sacraments, particularly those who were not attending Catholic schools.

Nevertheless, here she was an accomplished secretary, and a gifted musician, with her whole life before her. What might have inspired such a decision?

If we look at the cover of her Mass booklet, I think we may find an answer in her motto: *“Father, not my will but thine be done.”*

Only Rose Anne could have shared with us what this motto meant to her, and, like many of her generation, she would have been reluctant to spell it out.

But I think it hints at a great deal of her inner life with God. Rose Anne's parents, her Irish-born



father Patrick and her Australian mother, Mary Agnes, nurtured the inestimable gift of faith in Doreen and her nine siblings.

What we are all aware of was her prodigious memory and how much she valued and knew of her extended family.

At the memorial service for her sister Monica last year, two of her younger cousins came over to greet her. Having not seen them for some years, yet without missing a beat, she recognised them: “Emma and Laura, have you come down from Malaysia?”

What a great gift God gave to Rose Anne in her amazing musical talent. And she was generously sharing this gift right up to and even after her 100th birthday just two months ago.



From left: Sr Rose Anne Croke at her Golden Jubilee celebrations, St John of God Church, Auburn, NSW, 2003

Sr Rose Anne Croke gardening, ca 1970

What we might not know was that she was also qualified in violin and singing. In 1966, she was awarded the equivalent of an associate degree in piano at the Sydney Conservatorium, both performance and teaching. Then in 1977, she upgraded with a further Diploma.

Yet, all this talent and achievement was not primarily for herself. How many hundreds of students has Rose Anne introduced and mentored in the amazing world of learning to play a musical instrument.

One of them is here with us today, accompanying us on the organ. Dominic Mouwad began his lessons with Rose Anne as a small boy; he is now assistant organist at St Mary's Cathedral.

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Words of remembrance

Sr Rose Anne Croke rsc

From page 15

Dominic and his family have treasured her guidance over all these years, visiting her regularly and bringing her great joy.

Rose Anne was professed as a Sister of Charity in January 1953. Within days, she was teaching music at St Vincent's College Potts Point.

For the greater part of the next 45 years, until she retired at the end of 1998, she carried out a wonderful ministry as a music teacher – across six different schools – all around Sydney except for one year in Hobart.

When, earlier this year, we began helping her prepare to celebrate her 100th birthday, Rose Anne lent me her "little black book" so that I could check contact details of the invitees Sr Monette had already written out carefully under Rose Anne's direction.

There, on nearly every page, was a note:

"Today's Rosary is for", sometimes just a name or names, other times giving a reason for health or something else she wanted to ask from Our Lady for that person. Among her treasures were found several sets of rosary beads, well-worn with countless prayers and names.

Towards the back of her funeral Mass booklet, you will find an image of Our Lady of the Rosary. Notice too that the infant Jesus also has his rosary beads. Whatever theologians might think of such a unique insight, it speaks of her deep faith and love for Mary, Jesus, and the Father to whom she gave her life: *"Not my will but thine be done."*

May our dearest Rose Anne now rest in peace.

-- Margaret Beirne rsc



Clockwise from top:

Sr Rose Anne Croke (back row, third from left) with Sisters from the combined Auburn Communities, St John's Novitiate, Auburn, NSW, 1986
Sr Rose Anne Croke (centre), Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney, NSW, ca 1986
Sr Rose Anne Croke (front row, centre) with five Sisters at St John's Hospital Convent, Auburn, NSW, ca 1990
Rose Anne's Funeral cortège



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