

FAREWELL TO PORTSMOUTH July 2003

In 1959, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph (then known as the Ladies of Mary) opened their first community in the Diocese of Portsmouth, in Tregenna, Havant Road, Cosham. This was the first of our small communities, and a very exciting project for those times. I lived then in St. Colman's Parish, and have very vivid memories of the Sisters moving into the Parish. Quite honestly, I had never met anyone quite like the six of them! They were so human and ordinary on one level, and yet so prayerful and hardworking. Little did I know then that I would be entering a couple of years later.

Sister Mary Peter was the Superior and the Provincial, Sr. Celia was the First Assistant and also tried to be a Housekeeper (we could write a book about that lady!). St. Paul's School, Paulsgrove, was about to be opened....and Sr. Elizabeth (then known as Sr. Duchesne) was the first Headmistress there, and the two young ones – Srs. Joan and Maria – also taught there. It was a wonderful school, and drew pupils from Cosham, Paulsgrove, Fareham and Waterlooville. The Daley Family felt that the time had come for them to hand over their own Daley's school in Kingston Crescent, and were only too delighted to ask the Sisters to take it over. Sr. Mary More became Head there. The sisters made an incredible impression on so many people...and probably the best example of this is the fact that only two years later – in 1962 – 3 of us from Daley's (which had become St. Teresa's) entered the Congregation..... one from sixth form, the Reception Teacher, and me, the School Secretary.

We were then asked to provide a teacher for St. John's Secondary school in this Parish, and Sr. Mary Annunciata joined the community and took up the post. This School later became St. Edmund's Comprehensive School and Sr. Mary Teresa joined the Staff, and later on Sr. Agnes O'Shea.

We have worked here under no less than 5 Bishops.... Archbishop King, then Bishop Holland, Archbishop Worlock who suggested that the Sisters who taught in Paulsgrove, but living in Cosham, should live among the people in Paulsgrove. So Srs. Elizabeth and Joan moved into a house in Newbolt Road, Paulsgrove, which was then still part of Cosham Parish. Sr. Elizabeth was there for 12 years and Sr. Joan for 16 years, before moving to St. John's Cathedral School for a further 8 years. She had to retire from teaching due to ill health, but then took on a job in Bishop's House, before moving to New Addington, Croydon, where she is still very active. (Note Sr. Joan has since died in 2010)

St. Teresa's amalgamated with the Convent of the Cross, Waterlooville, and Sr. Mary More became Headmistress there. Later it became Oaklands Comprehensive School, and Mary More became principal of our Coloma College of Education.

The apostolic work of the sisters then began to extend in the City of Portsmouth. Sr. Mary Annunciata left St. Edmund's School to take up a post in Child Guidance. She was given a

centre in Victoria Road North, and was made responsible for teenagers with School Phobia. At the same time she was asked to help with female teenagers who were law-breakers at a Centre in Winchester. She opened up a House at 120 King Street, Southsea, as a temporary follow-up centre to give accommodation to these girls who were awaiting flats, and who would have been homeless in the meantime. Joan moved into Kings Street as her companion, while teaching in Paulsgrove. A Franciscan Sister, Sr. Anna, then joined Annunciata, and the project for homeless people began. It is quite incredible that these two sisters are still living together at Park place and still working for those in need. (Sr. Annunciate RIP 2006) Back then, they opened a House in Lake Road, then 5 houses in Luknow Street. Our Sisters helped all they could by doing night shifts with Annunciata and Anna, and gradually many lay people became involved too. The Land Commission offered four acres of land and a cottage to the project on a temporary basis.... and from this grew the work At Titchfield and Park Place. The homeless men not only received a home, but they were taught to budget, to shop and to care for themselves and their "home". They worked with animals, tilled the land, and grew fruit and vegetables.

Archbishop Worlock asked the Sisters to move into the Cathedral Parish. We closed both Paulsgrove and Cosham, bought property in Warblington Street and moved in 1947. Various Sisters were involved in giving Religious Instruction around the area....in Cosham, Paulsgrove, Leigh Park, Emsworth – and of course, here in the Cathedral Parish.

Srs. Elizabeth and Mary More taught evening classes in Kingston Prison. Sr. Annunciata joined them in this work, and when the Borstal Building was refurbished to take the life offenders, she continued to work with them. The quiet work that she did there was quite outstanding....and she was given permission to nurse many of the dying prisoners at the various homes she had. For the men to die with her, surrounded with love and care rather than in the Institutional environment of the Prison must have made an immense difference to them.

Our work with the elderly began with Sr. Etty becoming Matron of Jubilee Home for the Elderly. She then moved with the residents to a new Home – Mc Donnell-Watson Lodge, and she remained there until she was asked to become Matron of our own St. Anne's Court Home for the elderly, in West Wickham. Sr. Enie too was involved for many years with looking after elderly and dependant ladies in a Home in Southsea.

Many Sisters had been involved in other apostolic works....Spiritual Direction, Uniformed Groups for children, Legion of Mary work and caring for the Vicar for Religious who lived for a time in Cosham.

Sr. Cathleen took over the Cathedral Social Bureau from a Holy Souls Sister...Margaret McKeown. She, and many other helpers, both Lay and Sisters worked in many different areas. Many of you will be able to remember the Happy Club, and Holidays at Home which were organised from the Bureau. Sr. Philomena Lafferty took over this work when Cathleen

became a member of the General Team – followed by Sr. Maria Raleigh. Sr. Pauline Plummer worked with the Social Services, and Sr. Margaret Mary Davis taught in St. John’s School before returning to Ireland.

Other Sisters that I have not mentioned include Sr. Mary Andrew, who was also on the staff of St. Paul’s, Sr. Mary Hickey who had worked in Somerstown Clinic as a Doctor, and other members of the Community...Srs. Margaret Moloney, Mary Francis, Monica, and Mary Monica, Mary Catherina, Anne Bourke, Pat Pearson, Anna Mahoney, Edel, Alphonsus, Sabine and Ogilvie....all of whom lived or worked here in the past.

And what of the present? You have two faithful DMJs who have both worked very hard indeed in the Cathedral Parish in their years here....Sisters Mary Pauline and Jennie. I know they will be greatly missed. The third Sister who is leaving Portsmouth is Sr. Felicé, who is the University Chaplain, and is due to retire at the end of this month. It is because our ages are increasing, and our numbers declining that we have had to make the painful decision to move out of the Parish and Diocese after 44 years of dedicated work. As a Congregation, we have been truly blessed by a long succession of Sisters who have served the Lord faithfully by ministering to our sisters and brothers in a great variety of ministries. I would like to make a plea to you all that you continue to pray on a daily basis for an increase in Vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. It is so obvious today the “the harvest is rich, but the labourers are few”. The Church needs many more men and women who will dedicate their lives to the Service of God. Pray about this...and talk to your families about this. Encourage our young people to listen to the Lord’s call.

On behalf of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, I would like to thank Bishop Crispian and Fr. Hopgood for organising this Mass of Thanksgiving. Portsmouth is a bid part of our History. Thank you for all the friendships we have made over the years. Thank you too for those who have worked with us and for all those whose lives have been touched by us in any way. Let us continue to support each other in prayer. It has been an immense privilege for us to work in this great Diocese of Portsmouth. As we leave you, we have great sadness in our hearts, but, at the same time we rejoice that we have been instruments in the hand of God in our work here. Each one of the DMJs here today – and there are many who have worked here in the past and who have come from far and wide to celebrate- today can, with Our Lady, echo her words in the ‘Magnificat’



“The Lord has done marvels for me,

Holy is His Name”

Sister Sheila Moloney

20th July 2003