

Babs Toomey offered a tribute to Sr Marie Paula and enclosed this reflection in May 2016, a week or two prior to her sudden death. Apparently it was found in the hand-writing of Marie Paula after her death.

Babs wrote:

Dear Celia,

This is my response to your letter of March 1st asking me to share my experience of a particular DMJ who inspired me. I am useless on the computer so excuse errors etc.

The sister who inspired me more than anyone was Sister Marie Paula. Our children were at Regina Coeli where she was head-teacher. She knew me through the Parents' Association which our family group set up and through my lay apostolate work in the Parish.



The Government sent out a call for trainee teachers as there was a huge shortage. I went to ask Sr Marie Paula for advice about applying to train in Coloma. With great enthusiasm she said: 'You must do it. I want you here.' She greatly encouraged me and during my three year training was very supportive and encouraging.

When I qualified some three years later, she offered me a job in Infants at her school. It was a joy being at Regina Coeli. Sister took a great interest in the spiritual and educational development of the children. She would often pop into my class and speak to the children. She readily approved when I asked to take the class on educational outings. Once I asked if I could have a carpet to start a reading corner. 'You go and get one'. This was when child-centred education was in its infancy. The children loved the reading corner and enjoyed the freedom to look at books or play games.

Later, she gave me responsibility for preparing children for First Confession and First Holy Communion. She knew how to get the best from her staff and gave me the task of giving talks on parents' evenings – particularly talks on preparation for the Sacraments.





She was an exceptional Headmistress, generous with her time and especially involving parents.

I feel to this day a great debt of gratitude to her and very privileged to have worked with her and later to visit her when she was ill. In so doing, I was inspired in a new way by her courage and deep faith.

Thank you, dear Sister Marie Paula.

Babs Toomey.

Always ready.

There is not time to stop and prepare for the journey of death even if we could.

God demands the last day's labour as well as the first.

He seems to say:

'Never mind death. I will take care of that.

It is time for you to take care of life.'

Just at the right time the hand will be laid on our shoulder,
the word whispered in our ear.

We must leave the sewing undone, the floor unswept,
the plough in the furrow, the story untold,
the picture unfinished, the song unsung.

We may not, perchance, even kiss our loved one goodbye.

But let us strive to live that we may say:

'Yes, Lord. I am always ready;

for I need no money for luggage on this journey.'

'My hand is in Thine, like a trusting child,

I am glad to be nearer to thee, Father,
to feel more closely the warmth of Thy breast.

What I have missed and failed in, Thou knowest;

My poor, feeble, futile efforts to serve Thee, Thou knowest also.'

There is no prop nor stay, but in perfect trust.

It is all the cloak or covering I need.

I have lived on the river's bank all my life;

Now I am to cross with the great Pilot.

I thought I knew life here

Oh no, it was an illusion.

Now I am to live indeed.