

Memories of the Juniorate Years.

Clare Miriam Briody.



Back Row: L-R
Eileen Galway, Kathleen Dineen, Chris O'Donoghue, Nora-May White, Chrissie O'Connor, Diane Sullivan, person unknown

Second Row L-R
Mary Dineen, Lucy Flynn, Brigid Bartlay, Eileen Spillane, Mary Rosario, Mary Angela O'Connor, Mary Cronin, Annie Butler, Betty Nolan, person unknown

Front Row: L-R
Bridie Clifford, Maura O'Connor, Joan McAuliffe, Maureen Riordan, Rita Mullins, MM Brendan, MM Frances, MM Kevin, Kathleen Briody, Clare Devane, Siobhan Riordan

Seated in front of MM Brendan MM Frances, and MM Kevin:
Marie Burke, Madeleine O'Rourke

Memories can be the best blessing in one's life. I often go back in mind to the first days of being in the Juniorate at Castlecor. I remember very clearly all of the preparations my family and I made for my departure from home in 1947 to become a member of this elite but youthful band of the very first Juniors. We were 14 in number and we were all somewhere on the calendar line of between 14-15 years of age, young and so earnest to become nuns, we were so well-behaved most of the time. We each carried a certain kind of apprehension about being 'sent home'!!!

Our first mentors in religious life were Mother Mary Francis O'Connor, Mary Kevin Fleming, Mary Brendan O'Shea from the English Province. She was a wonderful English, Math, Science and Biology teacher! Mother Mary Kevin taught us Religion, Latin, French, 'General knowledge' and Music + Etiquette. Mother Mary Francis taught us Church History. All three of these pioneer sisters taught us the rudiments of Religious Life, community living, sharing what we might receive as a gift in the mail (like sweets or something simple). We were taught about different ways to pray and we actually had our own Office Books called Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Daily Mass was so important in our lives that we would walk into the closest town, Ballymahon, every morning at 6.30 for a 7am Mass. One morning a week we had the Parish Priest come out to the Convent and offer Mass after which we could smell the sizzling of bacon and eggs for his breakfast while we sedately ate our bowl of porridge wishing we could have the same eating experience as he!! We were so young but determined to be like the 'Little Flower' in a cold and damp convent. I do not regret one

moment of those beginning days of our beloved Rosary Convent. We learned to bear the cold and the dampness, a broken heating system and always the message that MM Francis would write to America for the money to fix it and the plumbing.

These three heroic women sacrificed much of their daily lives for us. We didn't realise how poor in material goods Rosary Convent was until one day, MM Francis asked us to write to our parents and tell them we needed them to send us a ration of tea and sugar every week and a cash donation of 7 pounds and 6 pence – actually a sizeable amount of money back in 1947. We had come from average to low-waged families but in her enthusiasm to have us in the Juniorate MM Francis had forgotten to tell us that we needed to finance our eating needs. Most of us would receive our supply of tea and sugar every Thursday by mail, with the cash wrapped in some cellophane or the like and tucked inside the packaging. No mail robbery ever touched our precious cargo.

The Juniors were 'growing girls' and we were always hungry so it was difficult for these three stalwart nuns to satisfy this hungry 'tribe'. In my later years I learned how the Sisters worried about our being hungry. They would let us wander in the old orchard some days and tell us to eat a lot of the apples growing there. Their intent was to 'fill us up' with the fruit. I recall always feeling so wealthy having access to so many apple trees. As a city girl in 1947 there weren't many homes having the luxury of apples growing in an orchard and being 'invited' to eat them.

Those days in the Juniorate followed with like experiences when we entered as Postulants are among the most cherished of my life. Those were the days when life was full of prayer and laughter and learning. Don't get me wrong. I had wonderful community experiences later in life but the friendships and real communication was so alive in our youth (not an unusual phenomenon) that we were a solid and good support to each other when we went to Belgium for our 2nd year novitiate and then off to the Missions elsewhere in the DMJ realm of opportunities we had become capable of teaching large classes of children with very minimum training.. while attending College courses in order to obtain Teaching Credentials. And Religious Life became more intriguing as we advanced in wisdom, age and grace.

I thank God for the women who bore the names of Francis, Kevin and Brendan to be followed by Dame Agatha and MM Joachim. Wonderful religious who left their distinctive marks of our DMJ charism every day and who loved us into mature young women religious. I love my memories of each one of them. I thank God for the continuing effects of having had their exemplary teachings to guide me through life every day.



Sr. Clare Miriam Briody