

Memories for Mona Sheehan

Life is a journey and who you meet along the way can have a big influence on how you live your life.

My first encounter with the DMJ Sisters was in St Andrew's in Thornton Heath and it was in the newsletter there that I read about a weekend in the Emmaus Retreat Centre, directed by Sr. Margaret Eason. Being in much need of spiritual food I booked in for the weekend. The theme of the weekend was "Women in Scripture" and the fact that I can remember the theme says it all. Margaret has such a knowledge of scripture and has such a wonderful gift of bringing scripture alive. They say that first impressions are very important and the warmth and hospitality offered by Srs. Celia and Anne that weekend was to have a big impression on me. During the weekend Margaret taught us to circle dance, a new experience for me but one that I thoroughly enjoyed. So a circle dance group came together in the Convent in Thornton Heath with Margaret as our teacher and we danced our way through a whole repertoire of circle dances and had great fun along the way. It was around this time that Margaret invited me to a day at Emmaus where she was giving a day for the Associates. Not knowing what I was letting myself in for I went along for the fun. I experienced once again the warmth and hospitality and what was very evident, was that wonderful sense of family between the Sisters and the Associates. Celia had me signed up before the day was over!! That was back in 1995 and the beginning of my journey with the DMJ's.

Sr. Teresa Clements was Co-ordinator at that time and who better to teach and share the values and prayers of the Founder? I have such good memories of Teresa and Fr. Chris leading Weekends at Emmaus. They worked so well as a team and too much was never enough. I can still recall Teresa using a broken urn to make her point about how God can use us, broken as we are to do His work here on earth.



I used to think the National weekends could not get any better but they did, year after year. Coming together was so very important, it was like a big family reunion on the Friday night. Of course the tombola got bigger each year and everyone always went home with something!!!! Who can forget Sr. Sheila Moloney entertaining us with song and stories.

I have fond memories of the Plenary in Ushaw in 2001 when the Associates were invited for the first time. It was great to meet the Sisters from all the different countries and again to feel such a strong part of the bigger family. We had great fun trying to find our way around Ushaw and I remember one night saying good night to Babs and Elizabeth and wondering if they would ever find their way back to their rooms!! I recall other Weekends “up North” where we were welcomed in true northern style with love and affection. I think what stands out most for me was that all our gatherings were such joyous occasions with much humour and laughter.

My visit to Ghana in 2002 was also a very memorable experience. Ahotokurom is a centre of Christian hospitality for the disabled and disadvantaged. Srs. Pat Pearson and Monica Smith are totally dedicated in caring for all those in need. They are heroes, not only to the people they care for but to all who visit Ahotokurom. My time there was a life- changing experience and one that I continue to treasure.

One very special memory for me was my trip to Belgium in 2003 in the footsteps of the Founder with Srs. Teresa, Goretti, Anne and Phil. We used that trip to record Teresa's indepth knowledge, and visit all the places associated with the Founder. How often had I heard about Collette de Brandt, Aalst, Geraardsbergen and Ghent. It was an enjoyable and illuminating experience.

That same year I was invited to become Co-ordinator of the Associates. It was quite intimidating to try and follow in the footsteps of Sr. Teresa and Maureen Dolan. I was extremely nervous but God gave me the strength to step out of my comfort zone and accept this role. This time gave me the opportunity to journey more closely with the Sisters and Associates. It was a joy and a privilege to serve as Co-ordinator until 2011 when Anne Wilkinson took over the role.

I am grateful to Margaret for inviting me to the first Associates day at Emmaus and look forward to continuing the journey.