

## Eulogy for Mary Matthew

I have known Mary Matthew for nearly 50 years, and as many of you know she was my first primary school teacher – but I'm not going to say anything about that!

Some of you here have known her for longer and some for a short time. But today we all gather to give thanks for a life well lived and to say goodbye to a great lady.

Sr Mary Matthew was born Christina Ann O'Sullivan on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1934, affectionately known to her family as Dinah she was the second youngest child of John and Christina, and she had 5 brothers and 3 sisters, all of whom have gone to the Lord. She grew up on a farm in Clahane, near Cahirciveen, Co Kerry.

In 1947 the Daughters of Mary and Joseph opened a Juniorate programme in Castlecor, and Matthew was in the second group after it's opening. She was 14 years old at the time! Someone who remembers her well from then said, she was always quiet, prayerful, and positive and liked by all. She made her first vows on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1954 and her final vows on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1959.

From 1954 until December 1998 when she retired, an astounding 44 years, Matthew was involved in education teaching infant and nursery children. Most of her teaching career was spent in Scarborough after moving there in 1966. She first taught in St Peters Primary school then moved to St Georges school when it opened in 1975. She was a great teacher and during that time helped many pupils and their families in her quiet way.

After retiring Matthew remained in Scarborough, and worked as Parish sister in the parish of St Georges until moving to Middlesbrough in 2009. In the parish of St Georges, she is well remembered for her selfless dedication and sincerity, as someone commented 'Quietly getting things done she always had time to listen and welcome everyone; in her gentle and cheerful manner she encouraged others, and the sick and needy especially always received her care and sympathy.' During this time, she was also a great support to the parish priest Fr Tom O'Connell, and as a former parishioner wrote on hearing of Matthew's death, 'They were both such a beacon within the underprivileged community and created such a welcoming atmosphere within the church they ran.'

During those years Matthew always enjoyed her trips home to Ireland to visit the family and as Sean and Kate commented, 'Our families all looked forward to Auntie Dinah's annual visit where she stayed with her sisters and delighted in meeting all her relations. Auntie Dinah had a lovely way with the children and young people in our family and enjoyed their company as they did hers.'

In everything Matthew has done in her life it is clear to see how she has been a woman of faith, she has always remained constant to God's call, giving to others an example of remaining steadfast in faith. Also, whether teaching or in the parish, she worked at spreading the love of Christ to all she met. As Daughters of Mary and Joseph we are called by our founder to reflect the values of love, zeal, gentleness and humility in our daily lives, and I'm

sure that those of you that knew Matthew, who lived with her, who worked with her, who have been helped by her, will recognise those values. I surely do.

Matthew moved to St Joseph's community in 2015, for health reasons and has been beautifully cared for by the staff here, for which we thank them. Often due to memory loss Matthew could not always remember everything, but she always had a twinkle in her eye and kind word for everyone. She died peacefully on 21<sup>st</sup> February surrounded by love and with members of the Community.

May she rest in peace.

Sr. Paula Spark