

Eulogy for Sister Mary Jude

Margaret Mary Parkinson, Sister Mary Jude, Miggy, Aunty Mig. Whichever name you referred to her, however she blessed your lives, whatever impact she had – I am sure your memories are happy ones.

There are many indisputable truths about this remarkable lady. The most obvious thing to say is that Aunty Mig had a long, predominantly healthy life and that from the earliest of ages she devoted her life to God. Family history tells us that our grandfather suggested a trip to Australia before she committed to the Convent, a chance to see the world and live a little. Aunty Mig returned more determined than ever in her chosen vocation. I now understand where my sisters' stubbornness comes from...

It is also obvious to say that she was the kindest, most loving person; whose selfless commitment and dedication was an inspiration to all. There is much we as her family don't know in regards to what she meant to those she met through her life's work - but we do know she spent much of her time teaching and caring for others. Many of her fellow Sisters we have of course had the privilege to meet over the many decades of family visits. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph are Aunty Mig's extended family, and we like to think of you as that too.

Aunty Mig took her vocation and community role extremely seriously. Throughout our lives, every visit, whether it be to Shirley, Herne Bay, Thornton Heath or any one of the other communities, was punctuated with work and serving others - always putting them first. This devotion continued long past the age at which most of us would welcome retirement, and it was only when she finally had to surrender her driving licence that she showed any sign slowing down.

Early childhood memories involve black and white floor tiles that we used as stepping stones, a huge fish tank and a rocking horse at St Anne's. Others include endless corridors with seemingly countless rooms to play hide and seek in and long Easter and Christmas lunches with the best food and some very giggly nuns.... It was rare to see Aunty Mig truly unwind and relax; but when she did, she did with style!

So, whilst we may not have a full appreciation of Aunty Mig's work within the respective communities where she was based, what has been evident is the love and respect she has earned whilst doing so. Only those individuals will truly know the specifics of the advice and guidance received, and the lasting effect on their lives. Aunty Mig's legacy of selfless commitment, of unswerving direction, and of course length and breadth of Service is indeed remarkable.

Hers really is a life to celebrate and to give thanks for. Certainly, it is a life our family is proud of.

We have always been so appreciative of how well you all look after each other. Aunty Mig had taken her turn in the past to care for the older members of this community and more recently she herself has benefitted from that loving care. We have never had to worry about her personal care, her security or wellbeing; for that we will always be so grateful. Even through the trying times of this global pandemic we have not really had anything to be concerned about. Yes, we have missed her and not being able to visit has been difficult for us all. We are grateful for the past couple of months since visits have been allowed to take place again and have tried to maximise the opportunity to spend time at her bedside.

Having a nun as an Aunty is indeed a rare privilege. As well as guaranteeing the warmest of welcomes any one of the houses or convents we visited Aunty Mig at, it also bought us credibility with the teaching staff at our respective Catholic primary and secondary schools. A trained early years teacher, a bursar and an excellent cook, Aunty Mig delighted in caring for others and her pastoral role. A keen swimmer and with great affinity for the seaside, Aunty Mig was instrumental in teaching us to swim in our younger years. She was also very competitive - fiendishly difficult to beat at cards, chess and Scrabble, she also delighted in Charades and crosswords; in fact, any challenge of intellect.

Her one possible flaw involved cars and driving; normal considerations such as speed limits and general traffic laws appeared to be merely suggestions to her. How Aunty Mig never received a speeding ticket I will never know. Although actually, having been schooled by nuns - maybe I do. Even after she gave up driving, she astonished the younger family members with a truly mesmerising turn on a racing game on Xbox one Christmas – and it wasn't just the family who knew her as 'the flying nun'....

Beneath Aunty Mig's kind and loving exterior, was a sparkling sense of humour and a razor-sharp wit. Following the hiatus in visits due to COVID - on the very first visit and immediately after a hello hug, Aunty Mig looked at Clare's hair and said: "well you've gone white". Thanks Aunty Mig!

Only a few weeks ago, on one of her last visits, Clare was discussing how comfortable her air bed looked. Infamous in her younger years for sneaking a post lunch snooze, Clare joked that if Aunty Mig budged up a little, she could have a lie down.

"No change there then" came the prompt reply.

Aunty Mig also had the humility to laugh at herself. When Mum lived in Battle, Paul and Susan were staying with their young family when Aunty Mig also came for a visit. The arrangements were that Ellen (at the age of 4) would share a twin room with Aunty Mig. As

Aunty Mig did sometimes snore, Paul felt it prudent to tell Ellen about snoring so that she wasn't worried in the middle of the night. So, before the visit he explained what snoring was and gave an example of a typical snore noise; Ellen was unphased so nothing more was said. Roll forward to bedtime and as they left their twin bedroom having said good night to Aunty Mig and Ellen, Ellen was overheard saying: 'go on Aunty Mig, do it'. Having queried a couple of times what she should be doing, they heard Ellen do repeated impressions of a pig snorting. Aunty Mig of course saw the funny side to Ellen's innocence

This love of life was evident in all Aunty Mig did. The simplest of outlooks; that every day was a gift to be enjoyed, and to be thankful for, is one of the most important lessons I have learned from anyone in my life. Sometimes we need to be reminded of that. And Cinzano and lemonade with family lunches; and ice cream for pudding -always.

In the end, her passing reflected her life. She slipped quietly away, without a fuss, surrounded by love and with members of her family and beloved Community. It is often said that friends are the family you choose for yourself; Aunty Mig chose the Daughters of Mary & Joseph, and she chose very well.