

## Anne Balfe Doran

I arrived in Castlecor on 1st November 1966. Our group finished up as a group of 9, Maria Farrelly, Consoline Flynn, Frances McCormick, Helen O'Shea, Joan Cummins, Margaret Maloney and Betty Beecher were there already when I arrived and Betty Crossan joined us a few months later. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming and I don't remember being home sick. Sr Danielle was in charge helped by Srs Eucharia, Francis Marie and Catherine Marie.

Life soon fitted into a pattern, the days broken into time for prayer, study, meals, chores and recreation. We were very well fed and looked after. Sr. Danielle organised classes in Scripture, Liturgy, Music, Art and French and while I didn't excel in any I got a great appreciation of all through my time in Castlecor.

I really looked forward to visiting day and our families were made very welcome and made a great fuss of. We spent much of the Sat sprucing the whole place up and cooking in preparation for the tea. Each family were allocated a table in the Octagon. Being the eldest of 10 there were many mouths in my family and as all could not fit in the one car a cousin became a second driver bringing some of my brothers or sisters plus his girlfriend. After a number of visiting days Sr Danielle decided she would have to limit the numbers each postulant/ novice could have so there was some disappointed members in my home. They loved coming to Castlecor and getting buns and cakes in plenty.

Christmas was very special in Castlecor and my first Christmas Eve stands out in my memory. As darkness fell outside a record player was placed on the top landing and Christmas carols and hymns were played with the music vibrating throughout the house. Two large trays with sand holding little candles were placed on the table in the Community Room, each candle representing a sister who had lived or passed through. The whole community assembled around the table and as each candle was lit the older sisters shared about the person remembered where they were and what work they were doing. What a sense of community, it made the missions feel real and close. I love to hear the Christmas Carols and each year once I hear them I think of Castlecor and the first Christmas I spent there.

Even though after two years I realised that the convent was not for me, I got a great grounding in Castlecor especially in the whole sense of Community. *I made lifelong friends there and 7 of my group out of 9 met up and had a night away together last October, - 50 years since we first met. I don't think there was a pause in the conversations - we had so much to talk about and catch up on.*