

## **EULOGY SR MARY CECILIA TREACY**

Where can one begin to describe somebody like Sister Mary Cecilia. I think it is possible to describe her as “an ardent missionary, a meticulous scholar, definitely a genuine FMA!”

My first image of Sr Mary was as a young girl going to school, I saw Sister Mary briefcase in hand walking slowly to the bus stop in Croxteth on her way to Liverpool University.

So, to describe Sr Mary as a perpetual student, is to underline clearly one of the great loves of her life. i.e. the study and research of Salesian history, which was her life work and her way of helping to keep the Salesian Charism alive. Throughout her life, Sr Mary studied, researched, wrote papers and attended meetings and I do not think that there is another sister in the congregation that has this many certificates, degrees, articles than Mary.

Mary was born in 1942, in Carshalton, Surrey and was the first of three children. Aged 17 she left home to begin her formation as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and made her profession in Henley on Thames on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Immediately following her profession, Mary attended the FMA Pedagogico University in Turin for 6 years and then returned to the province where she taught the young women in formation, whilst completing her degree at Liverpool University. Mary, then moved to Chertsey as community Leader.

The other great love of Mary’s life was her God given vocation and her dream to be a Missionary, and in 1982 she went to Moamoa, western Samoa as a community leader, and Teacher in the Theological College, where she helped the candidates in religious life, and was the Director of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Samoa. She continued her work in Leauava and then to Samoa, as community leader. One of our first Samoan Sisters described her as a “founding member of the Salesian Sisters in Samoa and thanked her for paving the way for us to stand on our own and to carry on the charism.”

In 1988 Sr Mary moved to Maputsoe, Lesotho and did part time teaching with the SDB novices there and then in Johannesburg, as well as being involved in the community mission. Mary loved her time as a missionary and she described these years as “one of the most spiritually satisfying and privileged tasks of my time in Lesotho and Samoa, was assisting in the training of the local ‘vocations’ to the Salesian Congregation. In teaching Salesian History, I deepened my own knowledge of Don Bosco and the movement he founded and that I believe prepared me for my time in the Institute of Salesian Studies in Berkley, California.”

In 1992 Sr Mary started teaching at Berkley, and then in 1994 she returned to the British Province, but continued to teach 1 semester a year in California, whilst fulfilling the role of Provincial Secretary until 1999. At this point Sr Mary went to care for her mother and followed academic courses relative to the history of the province. In 2007, after the death of her mother, Mary returned to community life and continued her studies and took on the care of the archives. As Mary continued to research and study, she also took on the role of Provincial Delegate for the Co-Operators, leading a community and serving on the Provincial Council. Mary was also a keen Mission applier and travelled up and down the country sharing her missionary experience and Salesian spirituality in many parishes and diocese. At the same time, she continued to research and complete her thesis, on the origins of the Province in Britain and in 2017 she was capped as a Doctor of Philosophy.

Mary’s life experience made her a good member of the community that offered a welcoming presence to the women seeking asylum. She was a gentle presence, a woman of prayer and good humour.

Sr Mary Cecilia lived her life to the full, having given her life totally to God, she responded with enthusiasm to all that was asked of her. She lived a very simple life and never asked for anything, and as she lived, she died, simply, unassuming, open to the will of God. Sr Mary was a gentle, kind woman

who understood the suffering of others and did all that she could to alleviate it. Sr Mary was a gentle community member, ready and willing to cook and she had the ability to turn a simple meal into feast with her meticulous planning. Sr Mary was the only person I knew that could make her cakes and desserts mirror exactly the pictures in the cookbooks!

Sr Mary had a great sense of humour, a keen wit and used her artistic ability during moments of 'boredom at meetings' to sketch the listeners and then share them with us all for fun. Sr Mary was a woman of great faith, with a very clear and great mind, and a great love for Don Bosco's call that she continued to find overwhelming to the end.

Many comments have arrived to us that have given us many insights into the Mary, and I want to share a few of these now:

"Sr Mary was one of the great learners and scholars of Salesian Life and traditions. We have been blessed in the gifts she shared with us all"

"Sr Mary made many precious contributions about the province."

"Her historical studies and work for the sisters in formation will long outlive her."

"She was such a quiet and unassuming person, despite the depth of here learning; she was also great fun."

"She was fondly remembered for her contribution to the early mission of Samoa... many of the older catechists and their wives in Samoa remember her."

Each of us has our own memories of Sr Mary, and we will have the opportunity to share these later.

Let us remember Sr Mary's family – her brother Tony and his wife Jan and their family in Australia, Samantha, Sr Mary's niece who is present her with us today. We offer you our condolences, our thanks for sharing Mary with us for 62 years, and we assure you of our prayers as you mourn her loss.

As we say our final farewell, I want to thank Mary for her fidelity to her call, for her readiness to share all that she learnt, for our story of growth as a province. We entrust Sr Mary to God's eternal love, and we ask her to continue to pray for us all.

Sister Pauline Clark FMA