

13th may 2017

Reflection by Sr. Maura Lyden, SSC

"My Peace be with you" - the greeting of the risen Christ to you all.

On this day, the 13th May 1917, three young children saw a vision of the Virgin Mary in Fatima, Portugal. She called each one by name - Jacinta, Francesco and Lucy. Our Lady gave them a mission - to urge people to pray for peace in the world. She said to them - "if my requests were granted there would be peace, and pray for Russia". Many of us grew up hearing that story, praying and even perhaps visiting Fatima to answer our Lady's request. It is no mere coincidence that we are gathered in Magheramore on this the 13th of May to celebrate the Jubilees of our eight Sisters who were called by name and given a mission.

Today, May 13th 2017, we have gathered here in Magheramore, Wicklow to celebrate the jubilee of our Sisters - Patricia Quigley, Abbie O'Sullivan, Catherine Lillis, Mary Nolan, Margaret Moran, Mary Dillon, Margaret Holleran and Mary Mulcahy.

"I have called you by name you are mine", was whispered to each one and at baptism the light of faith shone bright for them. Moved by the Holy Spirit they joyfully responded to Christ's call to leave all things and to commit themselves to bringing the Father's saving love to those to whom they were sent so all may be one to the glory of the Trinity.

They came from Dublin, Kerry, Clare, Kilkenny, Galway, Clare, Mayo and Limerick with their families to Cahircon and Magheramore following a star. Having embarked on this new journey into the life of God and outward to the ends of the earth, they were nurtured and encouraged by the witness of the lives of the sisters who had returned from mission. They still carried in their hearts the people who had welcomed them and with whom they had shared joy and suffering and had to leave behind. We know that the spark that ignited the fire to spread the gospel to China through our first sisters has never gone out.

Sisters, you began each day in this chapel, learning to pray-gazing at the cross, Jesus greatest parable-learning that suffering and failure are at the heart of mission leading to Resurrection. Morning and evening, the call to mission was heard from this altar in Chinese tones by Fr. Hugh Sands who gave incredible witness as to what a missionary is called to. Bonds of love and friendship were formed during this time that remains to this day.

The day commitment arrived when you made your vows assured by the word of Jesus-"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for whatever you please and you will get it.(John 7)I am the vine and you are the branches' whoever remain in me with me in him bear fruit in plenty(John 5). You were sent to different paths.



Patricia

You loved Our Lady and took on her words: ‘Do whatever He tells you’ as your mission. This was your guiding light in all the places to which you were sent and in all the relationships you formed. You came to the Congregation so well prepared for the many tasks that you were called to perform- Leadership on different levels- including Regional and CLT level. Now you are the Congregational person in charge of the Nursing Home. An often forgotten or unknown service was that which you gave to the Cardinal in Hong Kong at a very sensitive and pressured time. Many students benefitted for you teaching in Hong Kong.



Margaret

You chose as your motto “Abide in Me”. This experience of God being so intimate with you has been the foundation stone and guiding force in your life. You took our Lady of Knock with you in your heart when you went to England as a teenager- your first step towards missionary life. After First Profession, you went to America to study and then to the Philippines where you set up a catechetical program. The catechists who had participated in the parish program, directed by you were fully capable of continuing their ministry in the public schools. From there you went to work in Ozamis and then onto Molave.

You were called to leadership as a member of the first Regional leadership team in Ireland. After this, you were asked to go to the United States where you and Ruth helped the Hispanic community in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, where there was a great shortage of pastoral workers. You lived and worked there for 6 years until a Spanish speaking priest was appointed to the area.

In 2016, you returned to England- where you began but greatly enriched by the many missionary experiences that you were blessed to have.



Mary Mulcahy

“His will is our Peace. Come Lord Jesus”.

This is the motto that you chose-spurring you on constantly to seek out what God is asking of you and relying on his support. You are one of 4 girls who joined the Columban Sisters from the Mercy Convent in Doon. After study in America, you provided education for the immigrant families in Los Angeles. You generously helped the Sisters in the Sierra mountains in Recuay. This gave you a hunger to go on mission to Peru. You were sent there in 1984 to work in the parish of Independencia. You remained among the people for 32 years, your shared wisdom and from the very beginning built up the local people so that they could become leaders. Having just returned from Peru, you have left a vibrant generation who knows of Christ and are now leaders in their community.



“Peace be with you” is your motto **Mary**- the greeting of the Risen Christ. This so graced you for the service you were called to provide in your life as a Columban Sisters. As a teacher, you went to America where you took further studies. You were sent to Los Angeles to provide Education for the immigrant families from many parts of the world especially Mexican children. This prepared you for the next step of your journey to Peru where you worked in different parishes with catechists. You climbed the mountain with our late Sr. Eileen Rabbitte extending the apostolate to the Sierra of Recuay-a place of great beauty but also the place of devastating earthquake. You trained rural catechists to work in their own villages.

In 1983 on December 14, your received a call from the police saying that a Sister was hurt in Lima. As leader, you immediately set out on the 8 hour bus journey to

be with the sisters. There awaited the news of Joan Sawyer's death together with 7 prisoners who wanted to escape from Lurigancho prison. You comforted and supported the Sisters during this sad time remembering the advice of Fr. Blowick to the Sisters that the missionary call involves the total giving of yourself.

You had to answer the call to climb another mountain-12 years of leadership in the congregation. Peru called you back to build up peace and trust in the Province of Ayacucho in the city of Vinchos where the Shining Path terrorist movement made life impossible for the ordinary people. You found ways to work with the University students offering them an alternative to violence.



Catherine

You chose "Come Lord Jesus Come" as your motto as if you had a deep sense of the difficulties that people would experience in their lives and had no other hope except to call on God. You have long associations with the Columban Sisters as you were a student in Cahiracon and followed your brother Fr. Jimmy and Sister Camillus to the Columban family.

Your pioneering spirit found great scope in Korea.

On this very day May 13, 1949, Sr. Ita O'Mahony left the North Wall in Dublin beginning her voyage to Burma- a mission, Catherine you would later join. Much has been written about the clinic and the killing of Fr. Jack Walsh while bringing medicine to your clinic. You had to flee from there with the Sisters and the Columban Fathers, walking miles to reach Myitkyina.

Shortly afterwards the mission came to an end as the Sisters were suddenly expelled from Burma. You returned to the hospital in Mokpo. Some years later, you volunteered to go to Cairo to work as nurse in the desert.

Then you studied in the United States in the field of counselling. This was in preparation for ministering to victims of AIDS and addiction that ravaged communities because of poverty and unjust systems in our world. You have pioneered again a much needed and appreciated facility in Co. Meath. To this day, you are much loved by the people you helped in St. Theresa's Gardens and other place.



Mary Dillon

“To whom shall I go”

Mary you chose these words of St. Peter as your motto. These words express the cry of the poor and of those who are helpless. They call out to God and He hears them. You have responded to their cry for help.

You went to train as a nurse in London and in Dublin as a midwife. You were sent to Korea where you are remembered to this day by the mothers who benefitted from your care and skill as a midwife. After leading the mission in Korea for many years, you came home to care for our Sisters in the Nursing Home. When we were invited to return to Myanmar, you were delighted to be sent to Myanmar as a member of the first group. You reignited the old friendships and relationship with the people that Catherine and the first Sisters had known. You were working in a different situation. Like Isaiah, in the first reading “Look I am doing something new, now it emerges, Can you not see it? I am making a road in the desert and rivers in the wasteland”. You found a way to reach who those who were afflicted by AIDS and their families. Your awareness raising and networking with other groups saved the lives of many people. You were blessed by so many Columban Fathers who wished to help because of their love for the Kachin people. We are glad that you are able to be with us here today after just arriving from Myanmar.



Abbie

You are the youngest of our Jubilarians. You chose as your motto “Faith, Hope, and Love”. Schooled in the natural beauty of Killarney, it is no surprise that you wanted to respond to God who created such beauty. From the mountains and lakes, you imbibed the music, poetry and sort of the kingdom. After study in UCD

you were sent to the Philippine Islands where you taught in our school in Labrador. When our school opened in Hong Kong, you were sent to teach there. There, you also taught in Chinese Sister's school. Your skill as teacher is recognized in so many places including Croatia. During the war there, you were invited to help a community of Sisters who were in need. After that, you wore many other hats- the London lay Mission Program with the Columban Fathers, re housing project in Victoria for the young immigrant women. Now you are a valued member of Ballyfermot Boys School as a counsellor. In the recent past, you shared the end of life care for a professor you so admired and respected during your student days in CD- faithful to your motto-"and the greatest of these is love".



Margaret Moran

"Seek first the Kingdom of God".

We are united with Margaret today. After her studies in UCD she was sent to Korea where she is to this day.

"It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples." She has worked tirelessly in the kingdom of God from day one- firstly as the finance person in Mokpo Hospital. Later, she was involved in vocation promotion and mission awareness for the Sisters. She continues to help those who need English for study at home and abroad, their job and for their life in the future.

The Far East Magazine is a hundred years in circulation this year. The Korean edition is promoted and distributed by Margaret. She values our benefactors and invites them to join a prayer group that she has formed for their encouragement and spiritual needs. Margaret is regularly on line with all of us through the internet promoting prayers for vocations. The prayer that Jesus is our wish for Margaret today: "I have told you this, so that my own joy maybe in you, and your joy be complete"(John 11.)

This is only a snippet of the full lives of our Jubilarians who heard the call to leave all to follow Jesus. This is beautifully symbolized by the boat at the entrance to the chapel created by Fr. Patrick Holleran. It also calls to mind those left on the shore- your fathers and mothers who gave you so generously to the Congregation and to the mission irrespective of the personal cost to them and to the family. We remember them with great love and gratitude. They are now in the presence of God who called them to Himself keeping us ever in mind and heart.

I would like to conclude this reflection with a little extract from the poetice words of Abbie from the poem Colm Ban.

'The Spirit filled with divine fire
Lighting hearts and souls
Spreading throughout a continent
Spreading over time a to a world
Awakening and rejoicing in divine
Being
The pounding of hearts crying,
There is God
Jesus is the way,

The Holy Spirit burning within,
Caritas Christi urget nos.
(The love of Christ urges us on)
I,
You
Columban
Christi simus, non nostri'.
(Let us be Christ's
Not our own)

PHOTOS:



The Boat made by Fr. Patrick Holleran-brother of Sr. Margaret Holleran.

The Golden Jubilarians...



The Diamond Jubilarians...



Renewal of Vows



Cutting of the Cake...