

## WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE FOR SISTER ANDREA MYERS

We have all gathered here to say our last farewell to Sister Andrea Myers - her Sisters, her family and her friends. The numbers of her family here show their strong affection for her and Andrea had a strong affection for them, and great pride in their goodness. Her mother was a wonderful woman who married a widower, Harry Myers, with six children, taking on the care of his three boys and three girls as her own. Being married in the sacristy of the old stone church on The Hill (because marrying a non-Catholic was frowned on in those days) did not lessen her love or her generosity. Later two more children were born, Peter, who is here today, and Enid Jane.

I first met Enid when I came to the first class at St Joseph's Primary School, Merewether. We remained together through Primary and Secondary School and entered the convent at Lochinvar on the same day in 1952. I remember her as a strong sporty girl, a netball player and a swimmer, enthusiastic about performing in Physical Culture displays, but also earnest in her studies – always thorough in everything she did. As Sister Andrea she became a great Primary teacher and a Principal of large schools – St Joseph's Charlestown, St Joseph's Belmont and St Matthew's Page in Canberra, a school staffed by sisters of the Federation of Josephites. She was capable, organised and not afraid to take on huge responsibilities, always respectful of staff and students, loyal and hard-working. Over the years many staff members have stayed in touch with her; there is a Christmas card in her room from a former executive teacher whom she worked with at Page, typical of those who valued her leadership.

When a serious car accident in 1982 caused her to walk with a limp and to some extent weakened her body, she spent time in Bulahdelah where again she became the Principal of the school. From 1999 to 2008 she represented the Congregation to the outside world in the role of Secretary General, keeping all records in perfect order. Here she was valued for her gracious manner and thoroughness, always being ready to serve.

Her computer skills and deep attachment to her family came together in her exploration of family history, a work she had begun in the 1950's. This conscientious research led her to the story of her great, great, great grandfather, Joseph Trimby, a convict who arrived in Sydney town on the First Fleet in 1788. Some years ago I attended a ceremony in historic Rathluba Cemetery in the Glebe, an old part of East Maitland, where the burial site of Joseph Trimby was recognised by the First Fleet Association, the first time such recognition was given outside of the Sydney district. The crowd gathered in a grassy area, some dressed in the uniform of colonial soldiers, and Andrea gave a great speech on her ancestry – she spoke, as often, with authority. It was a grand occasion.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2014, Andrea suffered a cruel stroke which devastated her body and took away her speech. However, it did not diminish her spirit. She has lived here at St Joseph's

with amazing good humour and gratefulness, being pleasantly involved with everyone. What a good listener she became! Here her true beauty shone out as she let herself be known, and found she was deeply loved. She inspired us all. One male carer remarked to Sister Angela, "Sister Andrea has taught me so much about faith. She lives the faith." Many staff and volunteers have come to visit Andrea in the last few weeks. Cora, who loves to sing with her, told us that Andrea would mouth the words of hymns to help her along with the lyrics. I want to pay tribute to these beautiful staff members and to Peter and Maureen who have made so many sacrifices to be here, and who have cheered her so much by their thoughtful ways (and Peter with his antics).

Over the past four years and eleven months Andrea has preached a homily without using any words, and despite her frustrations (or perhaps because of them) has given us all much encouragement. She preached the deepest of the Christian mysteries, the one that bears the name of the place where we are gathered, Calvary.

"Out of darkness let light shine."

Go now dear Andrea, Brave One, and may your good works go with you.

Link to web-album of photos of Andrea's life: <http://bit.ly/SrAndrea>