

Words of Remembrance for Kathryn McCabe.

10th April 2009. Lochinvar Parish Church. Lochinvar.



*“I have fought the good fight
I have finished the race
and I have remained faithful.
And now the prize awaits me -
the crown of righteousness
which the lord, the righteous judge
will give to me.” (1 Tim 4:7)*

These words from St Paul’s Letter to Timothy, will resonate with those of us who visited Kathryn in the last three weeks of her life.

Kathryn was filled with a deep peace and a willing acceptance of her prognosis.

Indeed, Kathryn was impatient, eager to fulfil her heart - felt desire to finish the race to accept the prize awaiting her.

As her dear friend, Chris O,Connor, remarked, “ *How could we possibly be sad when Kathryn was so much at peace. She was so loving and gentle during these last weeks but eager for the next step on her journey.*”

One extraordinary thing that did occur was the emergence of a Kathryn full of energy and enthusiasm – a brilliant organiser. She contacted multiple people, day or night, with tasks for them - to track down different people, to cancel appointments, to collect something from the Convent, to return borrowed goods; to check up on bills that needed to be paid. Kathryn rang her lovely friend Greg Burns at 7 am one morning – “*Greg, go to the Convent, go into my bedroom, go to the bookcase and on the second shelf you will find a book of poems I want you to have!*”, However, the best example of this organiser was her phone call to Fr Kevin Corrigan shortly after her prognosis . Kevin had not heard that Kathryn was ill so he was speechless when Kathryn said, “*Kevin, I would like you to say my funeral Mass.*” Thank you Kevin.

I was totally amazed at this organised Kathryn and said to her , *You would be the most disorganised person I have ever known!!! What's happened??*" Kathryn gave that characteristic chuckle and replied; *"This is a God given talent I have kept hidden all my life."*

Three weeks ago her dear friend Chris O'Connor and myself were summoned to Kathryn's bedside. We arrived promptly, as directed, at 4 pm. Kathryn looked at Christine and said, *"I know I asked you 20 years ago to do my eulogy but I know you couldn't do it."* She then stared at me and said, *"You will do it. You can be honest but not brutally honest."* She then added a rider *"Just remember that my family is present .."* Now she said this not with a plea for me to be gentle and consoling but rather with the hint of a threat that if I did say anything disconcerting the McCabes would be waiting for me after the Mass.

These words of remembrance were organised by Kathryn and collated by myself and Christine and refer to Kathryn's life in the Congregation

Adrian will speak to the memories of the McCabe family.

However, I want you, the family to know how much Kathryn loved each one of you.

She loved you with a fierce, protective love. To quote Kathryn *" I have always carried my family in my heart."*

Your joys were her joys; your sorrows were her sorrows; your achievements were her achievements.

This deep love was witnessed by the fact that Kathryn could not/ would not die until her niece Kathryn arrived from America to say goodbye. Her niece arrived on Tuesday afternoon and Kathryn died that evening.

Kathryn has been part of our family, the Sisters of St Joseph of Lochinvar for 64 years.

Kathryn was a teacher. To quote, *" Teaching was in my blood. Some of my siblings were teachers. I loved teaching. I was not a great teacher but it gave me great joy. "* Kathryn chatted affectionately about her time in Windale and Ayr and recalled her interactions with many children and families.

Kathryn was my deputy at both Port Macquarie and Lochinvar. She was so loyal and supportive.

We had a good laugh when we remembered how Kathryn's brother Frank referred to us as Starsky and Hutch as Kathryn and I perfected our good cop bad cop routine.

Kathryn moved into pastoral work after teaching.

For the past 25 years Kathryn has been immersed in the faith Community at Tuncurry/Forster.

Kathryn writes, *" How can I ever thank you, the community of Tuncurry/Forster for your friendship and support? My wish is that you hold each other in unity, cherish the differences and walk into the future with great courage and hope."*

We, the sisters, also thank you for your support, love, respect and friendship you have shown to Kathryn and Louise especially in these last years.

Kathryn was involved in the Aboriginal ministry in the Parish. When Kathryn arrived in Tuncurry Fr Tony Stace was the Parish Priest. Kathryn saw Tony as her mentor in Aboriginal Ministry *" He taught me to simply walk with people, to listen with respect and to learn from them."* How Kathryn loved

this ministry. She was always available; always listening, always learning; always responding. Kathryn writes, *"To my dearest Worimi and Biripi family. You gave me so much love on our journey together."*

For me the greatest gift Kathryn gave to us was her beautiful kindness to our elderly sisters.

For years Kathryn, in the school holidays, would drive to Lochinvar and collect our retired Sr Conleth. She would drive her up the coast to Taylor's Arm to visit her elderly relatives. This was the only chance Connie had to see them and the time spent with the family was a source of great joy to both Conleth and Kathryn. *"I really loved Conleth and her family."* said Kathryn

When Kathryn first came to Tuncurry the retired Sr Cecilia Mary was in the community. Sr Cecilia had been Kathryn's Novice Mistress. Kathryn often referred to the difficult times she experienced in the Novitiate. Kathryn recalled that after some months at Tuncurry Sr Cecilia looked at her and said, *"I have always loved you."* Kathryn chuckled and said to us, remembering her Novitiate days, *"Well that was news to me!!"*

For the last 20 years Kathryn has lived with Louise in Tuncurry. Kathryn's love for and care of Louise has been a great witness to the meaning of sisterly love. In these last days Kathryn organised and instructed so many of us to ensure that Louise would be protected and wrapped in love. To you, Louise we offer our deepest sympathy on the loss of your faithful friend and companion.

Sister Laretta visited Kathryn on March 14, and asked her if she had a message for the Sisters. Kathryn said, *"Give them my love and say I thank them for their love and companionship throughout the years. They are the best people anyone could be associated with and I love and appreciate each one of them. If I have hurt anyone I apologise sincerely. Oh, and tell them I am in great, good humour."*

Kathryn's final instructions to myself and Chris were to conclude with the following words

"My ministry was a ministry of friendship. My life has been nothing but joy.

If God had been able to name me when I was born God would have named me Joy."

My soul gives thanks to the Lord

All my being bless his holy name.

My soul give thanks to the Lord

And never forget all his blessings.