

Words of Remembrance of Catherine Grant

Thank you for your presence here today as we gather to remember Catherine in this celebration of Eucharist.

We would all have your own special memories of Catherine and your being here is the real tribute to her. Words are not able to carry the essence of any person or add to a person's reality and Catherine was somewhat disinclined to have any words spoken on this occasion. However we do need to recall something of her life's journey.

Catherine's biographical journey runs from Canowindra where she was born in January 1933, daughter of Doug and Myra to Waratah where she quietly slipped away from us in the night while we were not watching. She would have been pleased, I believe, with the manner of her exit.

Catherine attended school at St Edward's Canowindra and then at St Mary's Bathurst and in 1951 entered the Perthville Josephite congregation and was professed on 30 March 1954. Known then as Sr Maria Goretti Catherine was a primary school teacher, a ministry that took her across Bathurst diocese from Gilgandra and Gulargambone in the north, Woodstock and Canowindra in the south, Portland and Oberon in the east and places in between like Manildra, Blayney, West Bathurst and Perthville.

Two of Catherine's cousins, Leo and Noel Grant were active priests in the Bathurst diocese during these years. It was at Perthville in 1969 and having reverted to her baptismal name Catherine taught in the primary school where among her pupils was Patrick O'Regan, now Archbishop of Adelaide.

Although a competent teacher and for many years a school principal Catherine recognised a call to take up nursing. I'm reminded of the saying *to your own self be true*. To the credit of the Perthville leader at the time, Sr Christina, Catherine was able complete her nurses training at St Vincent's Hospital in Bathurst. After a year at the Mater Hospital North Sydney and then four years at Mt Druitt Catherine returned to Gilgandra as a community nurse. In this role for the next fourteen years Catherine flourished.

Ultimately what matters in our lives is the quality of our relationships. In the role of a community nurse Catherine would have been caring for people in their full human reality rather than merely treating an illness, dressing a wound or giving injections. It was that generous care and respect for others that characterised Catherine as a community nurse and for which she is still remembered in Gilgandra.

With retirement from formal nursing role Catherine then spent ten years living in Terrigal as a companion and carer for Sister Jenny Buckley who was on home dialysis. There both Jenny and Catherine were active members of the parish community and are well remembered. Following Jenny's death Catherine returned to Perthville.

What followed was another major transition for Catherine when decisions were made regarding the ongoing identity of the Perthville Josephites. In November 2013 Catherine

became a member of this Lochinvar congregation. Since that time Catherine has lived in Muswellbrook, Windale and then Waratah and appreciated the welcome of the Lochinvar sisters, the presence and support of Sister Mary Stafford and the community living environment of the Dominican sisters at Waratah.

I have two simple stories that epitomises Catherine's seventy years of caring and service. When at Windale Catherine, herself already in her mid-eighties, began regular visits to a woman in the parish. When the sisters left Windale and Catherine moved to Waratah she travelled back to Windale each week to maintain the connection. She provided companionship and met multiple needs, everything from taking communion to putting the occasional bet on the TAB. The visits continued up to the woman's death.

In mid April I stayed at Waratah with Catherine when she was still recovering from a leg fracture, the result of a domestic misadventure. There had been a month in hospital and rehab and Catherine, still wearing the big moon boot, was looking forward to its removal the following week. Amid her own issues Catherine was aware of Denise's birthday and had a hand made card for her. I came to Mass that Saturday evening with the card to be given to Anne Daley to pass on to Denise.. That was Catherine.

The closing words of the gospel of the Friday of the fifth week of Easter, the day on which Catherine died are "*what I command you is to love one another*". Catherine lived that with a integrity, honesty and faithfulness that marked all her relationships. For that we are grateful.