

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE OF SR MARIE CRADDOCK

Sr Carmel Moore

Dear Family of Sister Marie, dear Friends, dear Co-workers, dear Ex-students, dear Children and dear Sisters,

Marie was born on 10th July, 1928 to Alfred Edmund Craddock and Maria Anna Belloti and given the name Marie Therese - a sister for Maurice. She began her education at St Joseph's Primary School, Merewether. There she learned violin from Sister Mary Cecily who also gave theory lessons on a Saturday morning. Marie told me that in her class was a certain Ronald Woodcock, who became a renowned violinist and played with national symphony orchestras around the world. However, when Ron missed one of his Saturday morning classes, Sister Cecily told him to go around to Marie Craddock's house and she would give the lesson to him! Here I think we see young Marie already the musician, the teacher, the curriculum manager and the carer- all roles at which she later excelled.

Marie completed her Secondary education here at St Joseph's College, Lochinvar and entered the convent on 8th June, 1945, taking the name Sister Marie Lucille of the Blessed Sacrament. After taking her vows here in this chapel on January 6th, 1948, Marie taught music in our schools at Dungog, Mt St Joseph's Cessnock, Belmont and Newcastle, living in the Star of the Sea Convent from 1961-1963, the site of the present Aventine units. In 1964 she was appointed to the brand new St Mary's High School at Gateshead as a Secondary School teacher. From 1967 to 1971 she was Director of Novices at Lochinvar, after which she returned to Gateshead from 1973 to 1975 and was then appointed to St Joseph's High School, Merewether, until 1984. Here she taught English to her high standards, for which she is much remembered.

Over the years Marie won many honours awards in piano, violin and cello – and in elocution; we all remember Marie's exact diction. She completed a Diploma of Theology at St Patrick's College, Manly, in 1970 and a Bachelor of Arts with first class honours in Linguistics in 1980. Linguistics was one of her great loves which shaped both her teaching career and the work she was about to begin.

From 1985 – 1994 Marie worked at the (St Thomas More Centre of) the Catholic Education office as head of Curriculum Services, liaising with Government and non- Government agencies at State and Regional levels, especially in relation to the introduction of Vocational Education, to the promotion of Asian languages in High Schools and Languages Other than English in Primary Schools. During this time, she travelled to Japan to visit Catholic High Schools there and set up an exchange programme between the two systems which began to operate a year later.

After a Year of Spiritual Renewal in 1995, Marie moved to our convent in Summer Hill, Sydney, where she remained for fifteen years. I can assure you that Marie was not idle. In a missionary spirit she worked throughout those years as a volunteer court support person in the Criminal Law Courts, at the Downing Centre, giving pastoral care to those who were waiting to go into court sessions, people who were anxious, frightened and often very lonely.

Also, she became the representative of Congregational Leaders of Religious Institutes (CLRI), NSW branch, on the Ecumenical Association known as Church Women of Australia. She would travel to this group for their monthly meetings even after she left Sydney, in fact for 17 years. While part of the group, she lobbied for a donation for Mums' Cottage, a ministry which our Sister Helen Anne set up to help struggling Mums, and something Marie strongly supported. While Helen Anne was expecting a modest sum, the International

Meeting of Church Women was held at Collaroy and Helen was invited to be a guest speaker. She said it was a marvellous meeting of women, many in highly coloured national costumes; they had a deep appreciation of the dire state of many women worldwide. So Helen came away with a generous \$7,000.00 which she used to renovate rooms in her premises and get her work blossoming, thanks to Marie's initiative.

While in Sydney Marie also led a weekly session of Christian Meditation in Polding House in the city and worked as Executive Officer for CLRI in their head office in Annandale. This unfortunately came to an end when Marie suffered a serious car accident when she was crossing the road in a pedestrian crossing near Summer Hill convent in 1997. She had a long and difficult recuperation from injuries that lasted for many years and caused her great pain. These effects increased in her later days.

In 2011 Marie came to live at The Junction again and despite her pain used her many gifts for others. She was, for example, a member of the Editorial Board of the Diocesan Magazine, the Aurora, her proof reading skills being much appreciated. As we know there was never an apostrophe or a comma that escaped its right position that Marie not did send straight back to where it belonged!

I am sure you are amazed at Marie's often unnoticed generosity in giving of herself – humbly and completely, for so long. Through all these years Marie has been our prayerful companion on our journey. She was unique in some ways, quite determined, most particular about many things and very mentally acute; under this was a humorous and curious mind and a deep spirituality.

Sometime in the past she wrote, "I value the development of my imagination, of the sensitivity and reflectiveness that penetrate to the essential, and of the love of beauty which results from 'seeing' beyond the evidence of the senses. I cannot overestimate the value of poetry... it is the 'open sesame' to spiritual realities."

Marie was a great reader, but in her later years she read poetry only; Mary Oliver, TS Eliot and others, often repeating loved passages until she knew them off by heart. At many a Congregational gathering I was led into a corner (because of Marie's quiet voice) to listen to the latest gem, after which she would say, 'Isn't that beautiful?'

So I shall end with a short poem by TS Eliot (because in the end it was only Eliot) - one of her favourites: Usk

"Do not suddenly break the branch, or
hope to find
The white hart behind the white well,
Glance aside, not for lance, do not spell
Gently dip, but not too deep.
Lift your eyes
Where the roads dip and where the roads rise,
Seek only there
Where the grey light meets the green air
The hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer."

Isn't that beautiful!

Dear Marie, you have lived an extraordinary life of generous service of your unique talents for many, many people. We shall miss you greatly. May you rest now in peace.