



## Remembering Carmel Hennessy

*Carmel's faith was fostered within the loving environment of her family and like many of us her vocation to the Religious Life was fostered while as a student at Saint Aloysius College. In 1947 Carmel entered the convent in Angas Street, she was received into the noviciate and took the name Sister Mary Damien. She was later professed in 1949 and then began her teaching career.*

*My first memories of Carmel were of her kindness when, as a young junior professed sister, Carmel was often rostered on to put the little boarders to bed. After our baths she would make sure we had our clean clothes ready for the morning, then it was upstairs to bed to be tucked in with a reminder to say our night prayers.*

*Carmel began teaching in the junior primary grades. She was an excellent teacher, creative and energetic and for many years she taught students at St Aloysius, the Goodwood Orphanage, Mercedes, Elizabeth and Parkside. She was hard working and whatever task she undertook she did it wholeheartedly.*

*As novices in 1962 our group was appointed to teach primary classes in our mercy parish schools. Indicative of her knowledge, experience and skills, Carmel was appointed our supervisor. Every Saturday afternoon she critiqued our week's work and helped us plan and prepare our lessons for the coming week, she kept an eye on the students' bookwork by nominating which set we were to bring home for her inspection. She supervised us with encouragement and kindness.*

*Halfway through 1979 Carmel began a 6 months Spirituality program in Baulkham Hills Sydney. On her return to Parkside she taught part-time and began pastoral work in the Parish and by the following year after 20 years' teaching decided to take on pastoral care for the people of the parish on a full-time basis. For the next 15 years she was very much part of the life of the Parkside Parish community carrying out her ministry with generosity, kindness and compassion.*

*In 1989 Carmel was able to participate in the Scripture program at St Georges College in Jerusalem. She was grateful for that opportunity as it led her into a deepening experience of her Religious life and ministry. By the mid 90's the decision was made for the sisters to leave the Parkside convent so Carmel chose to live in a community at Angas Street while continuing her Parkside ministry, but when she was appointed community coordinator in 1996, she had to relinquish the ministry she had loved and found so life-giving.*

*Not long after the Adelaide Day Centre opened in Moore Street in 1996, Carmel was one of the earliest volunteers giving her time and skills to supporting homeless people who visited each day. One of her regular tasks was to answer the phone, take details, relay messages and for many years she maintained the data base for the hundreds of Christmas hampers packed each year. On other days she could be found peeling and chopping ingredients for the daily lunch, packing vegetables into bags for distribution to people in need, sorting items – in fact whatever tasks she was assigned she did with care, because she wanted to be part of that community supporting Adelaide's homeless people. It was a two-way process for Carmel and while she gave of her time and herself, she would also acknowledge the tremendous love and support she received at the Day Centre, not only from staff and volunteers, but also the many men and women who visited the Centre daily.*

*In 2002 Carmel spent some time travelling in Ireland. On her return to Adelaide she lived in community in John Street in the city, then later when it was sold, she moved to Stanley Street, North Adelaide. Carmel had always demonstrated a loving care for people who were sick particularly the sisters in her community. She was a regular visitor to the hospitals where sisters, parishioners and family alike appreciated the time she spent with them and the tasks she did for them.*

*When the decision was made to sell Stanley Street, Carmel moved to a communal unit at Plympton until her physical health began to deteriorate and as she required more care and supervision she moved to Netley, and later in 2015 she moved to Southern Cross Care at Plympton from where she continued her weekly volunteering at the Adelaide Day Centre, until her deteriorating health drew her many years of generous support to homeless people to a close.*

*But Carmel's life was not all work. In those early years at St Aloysius and Mercedes, Carmel could often be seen on the tennis courts, black habit tucked up, veil flying while hitting a mean backhand. She spent many a Saturday afternoon attending Yoga classes but the real love of her active life was bushwalking.*

*She joined a bushwalking group and walked all the tracks in the Adelaide Hills and beyond. With her family she travelled overseas and together they walked many of the more challenging and long-distance tracks. As her mobility began to deteriorate, she found it increasingly frustrating not to be able to get out and walk. It was a great sadness for her.*

*Carmel was devoted to her family. She was the oldest child of John and Susan Hennessy and was a great help to her mother as each of her siblings – John, Ann, Therese, Peter and Denis arrived. In later years Carmel delighted in the birth and subsequent milestone achievements of each of her nieces and nephews. Today we mourn the death of our Carmel and we offer our condolences to her family, and we know that probably by now she has already checked out the walking tracks of Heaven with her God.*

*Rest in peace, Carmel*

*Thank you to the Mercy Community. I would very much like to take this opportunity to share some of our favourite family memories of our Aunty Carmel with you all.*

*My youngest brother, Richard, and his wife Jodie, and children, are unfortunately isolated in Melbourne and so are not with us today. However, Richard has shared some of their precious memories of Aunty Carmel with us. Richard said my most vivid memories of Carmel all involve children. "First my own childhood. I grew up staying at the convent when our parents were away. Carmel would regularly take us kids to the movies, on fishing trips, and when I reached big boy age (7 or 8), I remember helping out on her prep class excursions. As an adult, Carmel was invaluable with our newborn children, particularly as we were living interstate. Carmel stayed with us in Sydney when Alex was born and later in Melbourne when Nick arrived. Carmel loved helping everyone, but especially with children and babies. Sorry we can't be there to say goodbye in person - you were much loved by all of us".*

*My brother Philip also highlights Carmel's love and generosity to us "Keany kids". Philip has fond memories of the many adventures to the zoo, shopping trips to Marion, fishing at Brighton Jetty and being taken to the picture theatre, all with his little brother, Richard. "We were taken down to the beach to walk along the water, Henley Beach and Glenelg were always popular spots, as well as to Magic Mountain at the bay so we could play on the arcade games. Aunty Carmel always had some lollies or chocolates for us. Treats for children was a theme, and we were always very spoilt".*

*Philip also remembers Carmel's great woodworking skills; "she made us wooden fishing boxes, and wooden blackboard boxes so we could draw with chalk on long car trips with Mum and Dad. I will always treasure my memories of her and miss her terribly".*

*My eldest brother, Stephen, remembers three funny stories that Dad would tell. The first was about the kitchen cupboards at Moy Avenue that Dad made. The backs of the cupboards had a manufactured red and white stripped timber face, which I'm sure was very fashionable in the early 1960's.*

*When Aunty Carmel asked Dad how he did that, he said he used striped paint. You buy it specially and have to be careful using it so it doesn't mix. Aunty Carmel told everyone at the convent about how clever Kev was with striped paint.*

*At St Raphael's, Aunty Carmel had a fish tank in the class room and it seemed that every school holidays Dad would have to re-seal the tank as it was leaking. One day he saw Aunty Carmel lifting it up on an angle to dust underneath it - mystery solved. Carmel didn't like dust.*

*When Aunty Carmel was staying with another Mercy community in Sydney, Dad said "I don't think these nuns have much of a sense of humour". In saying that, Dad needed to call Aunty Carmel and as she wasn't there, he left a message. He said he was from the finance company and if she didn't make a payment today, they would be repossessing her bongo drums.*

*So, Aunty Carmel gets back and is met with a barrage of questions and lots of very concerned looks, to which she explained; that's my brother in law - he thinks he's funny.*

*My cousin Anita shared a lovely memory on behalf of her children all about chocolate frogs. Natasha, Ben and Tyson remember Carmel would always bring chocolate frogs to their house. Years later, attending Tyson's wedding, his first remark was to ask Carmel where the chocolate frogs were. Treats really were a theme.*

*Anita, Linda and Michael have fond memories of visiting Carmel at St Raphael's school and convent and the sisters would make them sandwiches and of course treats.*

*My own memories of Aunty Carmel all revolve around the love and support she had for us as a family. Plenty of BBQs with a nice bottle of red, Christmas's, Birthday's, toasts and celebrations with a wine glass in hand. Red wine is also a great theme in our family.*

*As I grew up, my relationship with Aunty Carmel matured. We formed a type of partnership in the care of my Dad, Kevin, after losing my Mum, Ann. Aunty Carmel was an irreplaceable source of support and guidance to me, and to my Dad - they shared a 5pm check in phone call nearly every day. Carmel loved, cared and nurtured us all as children, and it was my pleasure to return these gifts to her in her later years. I will always remember Aunty Carmel's love of black coffee - she would drink it a temperature so hot it would take the lining off of the roof of one's mouth.*

*We are all in a better place today for having Carmel in our lives. May perpetual light shine upon her. We will miss you dearly. Thank you.*