

Celebrating the inspiring life of Sister Deirdre O’Loan



Tribute from the IJ Sisters



IJ Sisters at Chijmes chapel in 1996

Many well-deserved tributes have been paid to Sr. Deirdre but as a community and a province we too would like to add ours.

It is always difficult to capture the elusive spirit of another person. The Irish have an expression, “larger than life”, which aptly describes a person like Sr. Deirdre who radiated great inner strength, vitality and a deep trust in God.

We shall always remember her for the warmth of her greeting, her buoyant good nature and hospitality and her kindly outlook to human failing.

She never grew old in spirit. There was always the glint of good humour in her eye, ready to surface at the appropriate time. She brightened lives and that is the gift of the few.

Sr. Deirdre was a person of broad outlook nurtured by her love of reading and prayer; a Sister of deep and holistic spirituality which permeated every aspect of her life and relationships.

Her unflinching cheerfulness, her gentle kindness, her unassuming helpfulness and her positive outlook on life always uplifted those who are in contact with her. Sister never lost the common touch and treated each person she encountered with dignity. She was so accommodating, welcoming and inclusive, thoughtful, loving and caring that she would reach out and help anyone in need.

Sister was an outstandingly capable lady of keen intelligence and was equally conversant in her own language, Gaelic, English, Latin and French. Her other gifts included having a photographic memory and great organisational ability.

A natural leader, she saw to the growth of everyone who crossed her path in her capacity as Teacher, Principal, Sister and Animator.

As a religious Sister, she was deeply spiritual and a great community member. She reciprocated the smallest kindness with great generosity and never had a harsh word for anyone.

Sister Deirdre valued community life throughout her years as a Sister. She reflected on her years on mission in the latest issue of the Sint Unum, a publication of the IJ Sisters, in March 2016,

Sister's gratitude to all

"Throughout my years of active ministry, as I wrestled with disappointments and contradictions, I was always deeply aware of the debt I owed to my immediate community, for their prayerful support, their encouragement and their shared wisdom. This support carried me over the humps and helped me face difficulties bravely. My recent experience of the power of community was a much richer one which extended beyond the boundary of the Province of Singapore to the Sisters of each IJ Province worldwide. Over the period of a six month life-threatening illness and all it entailed, I was touched by the concern of so many Sisters from the Andes to Japan, expressed in thoughtful messages of support and above all, by their assurance of prayers for my recovery. Receiving these in my darkest hour, reassured me that, if it were God's will, I would once again enjoy the gift of life. The sense of gratitude I experienced from this belonging to the greater IJ family was overwhelming.

I, likewise, drew on the support of my distant family members whose frequent communications encouraged me. Their support was reinforced by the concern and prayers of our many lay partners and, of course, the children in our schools. The sense of belonging I experienced made me deeply appreciative of their gift of friendship. I was truly touched too, by the quality of care extended to me by the medical team who spared no efforts to pull me through and who, when I recovered from a long period of unconsciousness, openly rejoiced and thanked God with me for his great kindness and mercy."



Sister with IJ Fraternity members at Mass

The breadth of her vision, her energy and her single-mindedness are simply incredible. Her enthusiasm and generosity knew no bounds. Deirdre was a pioneer willing always to move into the unknown with daring courage trusting in God.

The quotation of the man who stood at the gate of the year and our founder's saying sum up her trust in God as she ventured into the unknown:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the Year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than the known way."

"Whatever happens, be always at peace and trust in God." – Nicolas Barre

Though we feel her loss, her stay with us inspired us and left us with profound memories of a very special human being; memories which will also continue to enrich and inspire her beloved O'Loan family, our community of Sisters and friends and all those of various cultures and religions whom Deirdre cherished and served for most of her life in Singapore and Malaysia.

(Sr Maria & Sisters 31 Aug 2016)

On the death of Sr. Deirdre whom we love and miss deeply

Though we need to weep your loss,
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,
Where no storm or night or pain can reach you.

Your love was like the dawn
Brightening over our lives
Awakening beneath the dark
A further adventure of colour.

The sound of your voice
Found for us
A new music
That brightened everything.

Whatever you enfolded in your gaze
Quickened in the joy of its being;
You placed smiles like flowers
On the altar of the heart.
Your mind always sparkled
With wonder at things.

Though your days here were brief,
Your spirit was live, awake, complete.

We look towards each other no longer
From the old distance of our names;
Now you dwell inside the rhythm of breath,
As close to us as we are to ourselves.

Though we cannot see you with outward eyes,
We know our soul's gaze is upon your face,
Smiling back at us from within everything
To which we bring our best refinement.

Let us not look for you only in memory,
Where we would grow lonely without you.
You would want us to find you in presence,
Beside us when beauty brightens,
When kindness glows
And music echoes eternal tones.

When orchids brighten the earth,
Darkest winter has turned to spring;
May this dark grief flower with hope
In every heart that loves you.

May you continue to inspire us:

To enter each day with a generous heart.
To serve the call of courage and love
Until we see your beautiful face again
In that land where there is no more separation,
Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,
And where we will never lose you again.

With Archbishop Chia 2013





Some pictures of Sr D