Infant Jesus Sisters, Singapore *(founded in France, 1662, established in Singapore 1854*

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Update *– Memorial Mass for Sr Deirdre on 12 Aug 2018 at 10 am CHIJ Our Lady Queen of Peace, 4, Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330 followed by a simple reception.*
There will be an award ceremony for recipients of Sr D's award from the 11 CHIJ Schools.

Celebrating the inspiring life of Sister Deirdre O'Loan



Early years

Sister Deirdre O'Loan, affectionately known as "Sister D", was born on 16 Nov 1932 in North Cork, Ireland. Her father, Mr Patrick O'Loan worked in the Ministry of Agriculture while her mother, Ms Elizabeth Blake, was a homemaker. She was the eldest in a family of six children - Father Noel, a Carmelite priest and missionary to Africa, Ann, Pat, Aidan and Fergus.



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Photo 1 Mrs O'Loan, Deirdre, Noel, Ann, Pat, Aidan and Fergus, Photo 2 Deirdre with her Mum and her siblings, Photo 3 Deirdre and Noel

She studied with the Mercy Sisters in Kanturk, Co Cork, Ireland and finished her secondary school education but was too young to be admitted to the University. Her father was the Adviser to the Infant Jesus (IJ) Sisters in their development of new forms of farming at Drishane Convent. During that time, she had the opportunity to meet with a few IJ sisters whom she found to be human, friendly and kind. Hence, she accepted her father's suggestion to go to boarding school and study Science in the Technical School in Drishane while waiting to go to University. During her time as a boarder, she was impressed by the Sisters' breadth of vision, international outlook and great humanity besides their being wonderful educators. At 18, she begged her parents to let her try out religious life and promised that if she was not suited for it, she would immediately ask for permission to leave.

Sister Deirdre chose to join the Infant Jesus Sisters because she wanted to be sent on mission to the Far East. In her own words, "What drew me to the Sisters was the way they reached out to people - their understanding of human difficulty and frailty," she explains. "It was incarnational - reaching out to others in a very human way with understanding." Another reason was that when she was at school in Ireland, the international dimension of the order appealed to her as Sisters from Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and other countries visited her school and shared with them their experiences.

Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

On entering the Novitiate, Sister Deirdre spent two and half years in the study of Scripture, Church history, Theology and the Spirituality of Religious Life, Prayer and the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, and also the Spirituality and Mission of the IJ Congregation. In addition, she studied French and was given exposure to different ministries in her second year of Novitiate. Initially, she found it difficult to keep silence that was observed during most of the day but in later years, she treasured the beauty and value of silence. She felt that young people should be advised to keep periods of silence.

Sister Deirdre made her first profession in 1953 and after an intensive period of preparation with Sisters of different nationalities in the Mother House in Paris, she made her final vows on 8 September 1958.







Photo 1 Before entering the Convent, Photo 2 First Profession, Photo 3 with her family after her Final Vows

After her first vows, she entered the University of Cork where she graduated with BA Honours in Latin and English and subsequently she completed her Diploma in Education with Honours too at the same University. Her teaching practice was in some city schools in Dublin.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

She had asked to be sent out as a missionary to the East after her one year of teaching secondary school in Drishane but her request was not granted immediately as she was to help teach in the newly established school in Malahide.

After that stint, Mother Charles, the IJ Provincial of Malaya-Singapore, met her in Ireland and told her that she would be sent to her mission in Malaya. She was given a brief introduction and background to that country and granted a few days leave to be with her family before leaving for the East.

The journey by boat on the Laos was a long and arduous one. She travelled with two other Irish missionaries and two returning Chinese missionaries from Dublin to Liverpool to London to Paris, to Lourdes to Marseilles through the Suez Canal to Aden and then down to Colombo to Singapore.

She guessed she first arrived at the Beach Road area where there were remains of colonial institutions. She stayed at Town Convent in Victoria Street for two days and then travelled with another sister by train to Kuala Lumpur. At every point of departure, there was this sense of moving into the unknown. On arrival, Sister Deirdre was attracted to the beautiful Moorish architecture of the railway station.

Mission in Malaya as an Educator

Sister Deirdre arrived in the then Malaya in 1959 at 27 and later taught at the Bukit Nanas Convent in Kuala Lumpur.

A community of 30 sisters of different nationalities - Burmese, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian - welcomed her. The Superior was an Irish Sister, Sr Francis Xavier, a very good educator. Bukit Nanas Convent offered classes from Standard 1 to 6, and 5 years in Secondary School. The school was big with more than 1000 pupils. Sister Deirdre taught English, Literature and Bible Studies. The highest standard was the O levels.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

At the end of 1960, the school managed to get approval to start the A levels and Sister Deirdre pioneered the A level classes.









Photo 1 with her 'O' level students in CHIJ Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur, Photo 2 & 3 with her 'A' level students, Photo 4 at her desk in the library

One of her first students gives a first-hand account of her mission there.

"In 1959, Sister Deirdre arrived in Kuala Lumpur – it must have been a daunting and difficult trip for her, to leave behind the safety and familiarity of her Ireland, to come East to a country that only 2 years earlier had achieved independence from Britain. Perhaps the fact that her new home would be a convent assured her somewhat. The convent that became her Malaysian home was our school, the Bukit Nanas Convent of Kuala Lumpur. It sat atop the "pineapple hill" so named because there was said to have been planted a large ring of pineapples to protect the garrison serving Rajah



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Abdullah. The convent was a short walk from the brother school of St John's Institution and the new St John's Cathedral that had been built 4 years earlier.

Our convent was a spacious, serene place, filled with countless nooks and corners as well as stretches of off-limit intriguing areas, possessing a quiet and calm dignity common to all convents; it would attempt to process generations of schoolgirls, and turn them into young ladies endowed with the prized education, so coveted by their parents. The girls either studied as day students or were out of towners who boarded at the school.

Soon after arriving, Sister Deirdre started teaching the Fourth Form in English, Literature and Scripture. Bee Ling remembers Sister D teaching an additional subject, Latin, to 5 girls after school hours. We were her pioneer group of students. On the first day that she appeared, she was dressed in her all-white nun's habit, with a pointed coif and a long-sleeved heavy floor-length gown that must

have caused her to melt continually; yet she seemed cool, with nary a drop of perspiration (in those days we were regularly reminded by the Reverend Mother i.e. Principal, that ladies perspired and only horses sweated). We saw with relief, a slim, apple-cheeked, fresh-looking, good-looking nun, smiling at us with Irish eyes and mouth, and speaking with a musical accent that we took a bit of time to get used to. She introduced herself as Sister Fergus (her name then). This was no dragon, we thought.

From the start however, we discovered that beneath that smiling exterior lurked hidden steel. Sister D had high expectations of us and said so, leaving little room for doubt. We, who had been on cruise control, and had been getting by with regurgitation of facts, suddenly had to expound original ideas and opinions in our essays and oral sessions with her. She brooked no laziness, could quell any rebelliousness with a look and some choice comments, like telling us that although we all had common sense, it was rather uncommon at times in us, or that the crème de la crème was showing signs of curdling. In turn, the braver among us sparred with her and one of us by the name of Mary, who had a good insight into Sister D, rattled her with a well planted dead cockroach on her table, or by telling her there was a rat at her foot.

Our stretching had started and so it continued throughout our time with her. Because she challenged



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us consistently, and expected so much of us, we felt we had to rise to the occasion and meet her standards, as we could not possibly disappoint her.

As one of the best educators we had (we used the more old fashioned term 'teacher' in those days), Sister D knew each of us well - our strengths, our faults, our weaknesses and constantly guided us. She boosted our self-esteem and made us believe in ourselves because she never harboured any doubts about us. She was confident we would turn out principled, moral and ethical, but not necessarily with a stiff upper lip in the process, as she was too Irish for that. The lessons we learned from her have been our guiding principles in life and remained so all these years.

After graduation, we each went our own way, and looked back occasionally, nostalgically, and said in effect that those were the days. About 2 decades later, we reconnected in Singapore and fortunately found Sister D again. We became friends for life and she followed our journey, through our marriages, births, children's marriages, arrival of grandchildren, in sickness and in health, comforted us when we were down and celebrated with us when we were happy.

About 2500 years ago, Confucius said of a teacher that he should study tirelessly and teach enthusiastically (xue er bu yan, hui ren bu juan 学而不厌,诲人不倦) - Did he ever imagine he would describe so aptly an Irish nun and teacher?

Rest in peace Sister D – we will really miss you

Dr Kok Lee Peng and the Pioneer group of students from CHIJ Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Photos 1 & 2 at the CHIJ Bt Nanas anniversary celebration in KL, Photo 3 with a few of her pioneer students

Sister Deirdre recalled with fond memories, her time as a teacher starting the A level course in the Bukit Nanas Convent and her outings in Cameron Highlands and Port Dickson with her students.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

The May 13 1969 riots in Malaysia left a deep impact on Sister Deirdre. She served in the Red Cross as a volunteer, taking care of patients and helping in the camp kitchen.

Two lessons remained with Sister Deirdre: 1) You do not know where danger could lurk and 2) The terrible power of rumours which can trigger alarming behaviour. She became very appreciative of sensitivities that could arise because of racial differences and realised the importance of racial harmony.

With the new policy of Malaysianization, ten years is the maximum time given to foreign missionaries to work within the country. She was sad to leave Malaysia.

At that time, the Archbishop was looking for religious Sisters and Brothers of the teaching orders to take up teaching positions in Catholic Junior College (CJC) in Singapore. Mother Anne Tan, the then Provincial invited Sister Deirdre to consider working in CJC which was in the process of starting.
Sister was offered a Sabbatical and she took the opportunity to further her knowledge in Library and Information Science at the University of London. She was appreciative of the many opportunities of being attached to a few University and Public Libraries and be allowed to attend Planning and Management meetings as an observer. She got tremendous insights into the role of university libraries working in collaboration with lecturers and offering research resources. Sister felt that that experience prepared her for her future work at the Junior College, and her reflection of the difficulties in meeting schedules for assignments made her more understanding towards her students in this area.

Mission in Singapore as an Educator in Catholic Junior College (CJC)

On arrival in Singapore in June 1974, Sister was asked to take temporary classes in Katong Convent. She taught English, Literature and General Paper. This was to initiate her into the ways of the Singapore education system.

In January 1975, CJC began. It was an extremely difficult beginning because the building was



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

incomplete and classes were held in four different schools. Despite the incomplete facilities, the resourceful and resilient students were focussed in their studies and there were no complaints. The new Junior College system with lectures and tutorials prepared them for University studies.

Sister worked collaboratively with the Principal, Bro Patrick, and other key personnel to lay the foundation of the ethos of CJC with its emphasis on character formation and academic excellence and at the same time to build a community of caring persons. She was instrumental in setting up the library as the nerve centre that promoted additional resources to widen the perspective of the students in their learning.

Starting as a teacher in the General Paper, Sister moved on to be the Head of the English Department, Vice-Principal in 1986 and Principal of the College from 1988 to 1994. She loved the Junior College age group and encouraged growth in both the staff and the students. As a person, Sister felt strongly that people needed to be affirmed in their strengths and appreciated for who they are. She gave scope and encouraged initiatives from the students and was there supporting their games and competitions.

Students fondly remember her for always willing to give them a second chance to prove themselves.

Mrs Sng Mee Lian, a colleague in the English Department, recalls her time with Sister in CJC. Her article is found in the Catholic News. (see below)

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Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

Much loved former CJC principal called to the Lord

By Sng Mee Lian

Sr Deirdre O'Loan was a much loved and inspiring principal who was always concerned about the welfare of the students and staff of Catholic Junior College.

Her students in her home tutorial group, A5 of 1975/76, treasure her as a great teacher who loved her students and inspired them to excel, and they continued to meet her regularly throughout the years.

Mr Augustine Tan, chairman of the Archdiocesan Land and Properties Singapore, said, "She helped mould me into what I am today. She inspired me to love English literature and her greatest asset is to help you believe in yourself and your abilities. Her spirit of being truly caring for others will forever stay with us."

The staff of CJC loved and respected her as well. To Mr Louis Lim, our first Head of PE, she was "a gracious and inspiring colleague and administrator who always had a heart for everyone". In particular, she believed in the importance of the family and the staff having time for their families in the midst of working hard for their students.

She showed a keen interest in the welfare of the families of staff members and was always ready to assist them in family matters even when she was no longer principal.

Her personal touch was evident in small yet important gestures such as sitting down in the canteen with the teachers to have her morning cup of coffee.

Mrs Mary Gan (retired Economics teacher) remembers vividly Sister D (as she is fondly referred to) making her a cup of coffee during a long evening counting money from the CJC Carnival! Madam Sa'diah, a pioneer executive officer, recounted how Sr D manned the General Office in the evening so that staff members could go for their regular jog at 5.30 pm.



Sr Deirdre O'Loan passed away on Aug 13.

Mr Gerard Lee, chairman of our School Management Committee, found her to be a most kind and considerate person and was deeply impressed by the respect she accorded him as they worked together for the good of CJC. Mr David Fahy (a Literature teacher) remembers Sister D with "affection and admiration as a very eloquent and erudite lady richly complemented by wit and wisdom".

Sr Deirdre was one of CJC's pioneers who created its infrastructure. The CJC library was Sister D's creation and she was a pioneer in the setting up of school libraries in Singapore.



Sister Deirdre seen here with former students of her tutorial group, A5 of 1975/76, in 2015.

She chose the Dewey Classification System because it is used in many university libraries globally and she believed in the importance of reading beyond the syllabus to develop critical thinking and achieve academic excellence.

Mrs Ng Kee Luan (retired librarian) and Madam Jalikha, a library support officer, developed their love of being librarians under the guidance of Sr Deirdre, who was a professional librarian.

She also loved Literature and always supported CJC's events in the performing and literary arts long after she retired. A favourite line of hers from the poet Robert Browning was: "A man's reach should exceed his grasp."

Sr Deirdre's strong convictions included a belief in an inclusive society. Hence she was always conscious of the necessity to respect all faiths within a Catholic environment. This is a belief that continues to exist in CJC today.

Masses are held regularly every week in the Chapel for catholics outside curriculum time and non-Catholics are welcome to attend if they wish.

Another of her fundamental beliefs was that inclusivity meant that all our students must be given equal opportunities and support to develop their potential to the fullest, and become young people of integrity, as well as leaders in society working for the greater good.

One indelible memory I have of Sister D is seeing her looking after the sick elderly in the convent she lived in after a long day as a principal! She was always cheerful, witty, vibrant and full of energy in everything that she did and she contributed much to Singapore as a pioneer educator.

She was working for the convents that she supervised right up to the few days before her death.

We have indeed lost a wonderful teacher, leader, mentor, colleague and friend!

The writer is a teacher at Catholic Junior College. □

Sr Deirdre O'Loan: life and times

Sr Deirdre O'Loan of the Infant Jesus Sisters in Singapore passed away at 83 years old on Aug 13. She had pancreatic cancer.

Sr Deirdre came to Singapore in 1974. She was with Catholic Junior College (CJC) from its establishment, first as a General Paper teacher and later as head of the English department. She was CJC's vice-principal in 1986 and principal from 1988 to 1994.

From 1994, she served as the supervisor of the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) schools. In 2014, Sr Deirdre was recognised as an inspiring leader in the field of education and received the Public Service Star for her contributions.

Her wake was held in the CHIJ Convent at 4A Chestnut Drive with Mass and prayers every night at 7 pm. Her funeral was held on Aug 17 at 10.15 am at the Church of St Joseph (Bukit Timah). Cremation followed at Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 at 12.30 pm.

We invite you to remember her in your Masses and prayers. *Submitted by CHANCERY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF SINGAPORE*

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Photo 1 At CJC Carnival, Photo 2 with students and staff, Photo 3 with some staff



Sister Deirdre accepted the invitation to be a citizen of Singapore on 23 May 1994.

Singapore is now home for Sister Deirdre. 'I will always remain Irish,' she says, 'but I have put down roots here and I have wonderful friends. Singapore adopted me rather than I adopted Singapore.' And what does Ireland think of her sons and daughters who have contributed so much in foreign lands? For many Irish it means an instant connection wherever they go in the world. Even today Sister Deirdre, now in her early-80s, helps new arrivals settle in to Singapore, people she doesn't know but who are referred to her through friends and relatives in Ireland.

According to the great Irish writer George Bernard Shaw, 'Progress is impossible without change.' Change and progress go hand-in-hand as far as Sister Deirdre was concerned. Innovations in Singapore's education during the 50 years since 1965 include the setting up of Junior Colleges. Sister Deirdre came to Singapore to teach at Catholic Junior College (CJC), having spent more than a decade at Bukit Nanas Convent in Kuala Lumpur.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

In 1994 she retired as principal of CJC and took up her present role as supervisor of the 11 CHIJ schools in Singapore. The first formal CHIJ Board of Management was set up in 1975, chaired by Dr Ee Peng Liang. Since then an IJ Sister has been supervisor, providing support and encouragement, guidance and advice both to the board and to the CHIJ schools.

Twenty years on, and 56 years after she first left Ireland, Sister Deirdre has overseen the introduction of new ideas and improvements, including the rebuilding of all the CHIJ schools. She continues to be extremely interested in the development of education in Singapore. Her regular school visits mean she is up to date with their latest news, projects and events. ‘Each school is similar in ethos but distinctive thanks to the history that has shaped it.’ Though no longer in the classroom, Sister Deirdre is familiar to CHIJ girls through her visits, writing for school newsletters and yearbooks, as well as giving speeches on special occasions.

In describing her role, Sister Deirdre speaks of fidelity to the original vision of the IJ Sisters, the traditions of the CHIJ schools and re-interpreting these for the needs of education today. ‘I am enthusiastic about changes and developments in Singapore’s education. The system has been transformed with multiple pathways and possibilities,’ she says. Being open to transformation, looking for new ideas, new approaches and methodologies in teaching, without losing sight of the IJ legacy and essential vision, are among the reasons why the CHIJ schools have survived and continue to thrive for over a century-and-a-half. Preparing for the future is something that Sister Deirdre embraces. For the past few years a number of the management tasks connected with the supervisor’s role have been shared with a lay person, while she keeps a watching brief on the important thrust of ongoing formation. ‘As a retiree I am well placed to do the work, so long as I have the mental powers and enthusiasm.’

Rosemary Lim: “Irish Connections – Ireland's Intrepid Educationalists in Singapore” in 50 years of Singapore-Europe Relations

Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

Mission in Singapore as Supervisor of CHIJ Schools

Upon her retirement, Sister D was appointed the Supervisor of the eleven IJ Schools in 1994.

Sister D always placed the schools, children, Principals, Teachers and all others before herself. Her primary focus throughout her time on the IJ Board of Management of some 22 years, was the education, welfare and holistic well-being of every child, Teacher, Staff and Principal in each one of our schools.



Sister being congratulated by the Prime Minister of Singapore

The President of Singapore awarded Sister D the Public Service Star in the National Day Awards in 2014 in recognition of her contribution to education.

The IJ Board had on that occasion recorded the following:

(a) the CHIJ Board of Management (IJ Board) records and conveys the Board's heartiest congratulations to Sister Deirdre on the award of the Public Service Star (by the President) to her for her distinguished and immense contributions to the IJ Board, the IJ Sisters and all the thousands of girls who have benefitted from our 11 CHIJ schools;

(b) the IJ Board also records and conveys our deepest appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to Sister Deirdre for her total dedication and sterling contributions to the IJ community and the education landscape of Singapore;



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

(c) Sister Deirdre's immense and excellent contributions have clearly facilitated the work and ethos of the IJ Board, the IJ Secretariat, the Principals, Teachers, staff and all our schools and the whole community;

(d) Sister Deirdre has, in her many years as a critical member of the IJ community, selflessly given her all, and life, in the work of our IJ Schools, IJ community and Singapore; and

(e) we are all confident that Sister Deirdre will continue her excellent service to the IJ community and Singapore for many more years and we sincerely applaud and thank Sister Deirdre.

Sister D continued to undertake and perform with passion her critical role as the Supervisor, and a mentor to all of us, during her illness and until her final days. She went home to be with the Lord, at the age of 83 on 13 Aug 2016 at 7.43 am, at the IJ Convent at Chestnut Drive, surrounded by her beloved IJ Sisters and close friends.

We on the IJ Board had deliberated the wordings for Sister D's obituary. Our intention was to endeavour to adequately but succinctly describe our gratitude and loss. The wordings were in the following terms:

"The Infant Jesus Board of Management
deeply mourns the passing of our beloved
Sister Deirdre O'Loan
Supervisor of the IJ Schools
on 13 August 2016

We, and the whole IJ community of Sisters, Principals, Teachers, Staff and Students, past and present, of all our schools will always remember her and honour her legacy.
We are deeply grateful for her dedication, love and steadfast service over the past 57 years to the education and well-being of our children and community."



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***

Vivienne Lim, Chairperson of the IJ Board of Management (IJBoard), stated the following in the media and I quote:

"Sister Deirdre was a well-loved educator who embodied the CHIJ motto of being:
'Simple in Virtue, Steadfast in Duty',
working tirelessly for others till the very end."

She saw what was unique in each child, and gave of herself to all around her. From students in the schools, to the custodians, carpark attendant, she would always make time to stop and share a kind word with them."

All of us on the Board certainly identify and agree wholeheartedly with Vivienne's sentiments.

Karen Tay, Principal, CHIJ Secondary,Toa Payoh, was quoted in the media of having stated, inter alia, the following:

"*... Sister Deirdre regularly attended school events and actively gave Principals of the CHIJ schools a lot of support and direction to uphold the mission and motto of the schools. We have gained a lot from her generosity of spirit and wisdom. She has a calmness about her that gives us a sense of peace when we do our work. She has always had a listening ear for everyone."*

Karen's observation of Sister D's generosity of spirit and wisdom, and the calmness about her giving the rest of us a sense of peace, is another facet of Sister D that resonates with us all.

Sister D's wake was held, according to her wishes, at the IJ Convent at 4A Chestnut Drive where she resided and was animator of the IJ community there.

All of us were witnesses to the multitudes of people who attended the wake, the nightly Mass and prayers, and who shared wonderful and touching memories of Sister D. The mourners included people from all walks of life who had been touched by Sister D's life and work as a Nun, Teacher, Principal, the Supervisor of our IJ schools, a mentor and as a steadfast daughter of Christ.

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The arrangements for Sister D's wake and the funeral on Wed 17 Aug 2016 involved the girls, Teachers, Staff and Principals from all our 11 schools, the IJ Board, the IJ Homes, all the IJ Sisters, friends and the whole IJ community.

The final send off, attended by Sister D's siblings, namely Ann, Pat, Fergus and brother-in-law Pascal Buckley and niece Pat Buckley, was beautiful, dignified and befitting, totally for a lady of steel, and grace, and of God. The 11 Priests and 3 deacons who joined Friar Michael D'Cruz who celebrated the Mass is testament to the extent that Sister D touched everyone, including the religious.

Sister D was an intelligent, witty and well-read nun who was an inspiration to us all. She had clarity of thought, especially when dealing with difficult issues, and moved on with fortitude. She fulfilled her duties diligently with total dedication and an unflinching pursuit of what was right. She had a firm conviction to do right by everyone. She also had an innate passion to serve, for the benefit of others. Her passion for the education and holistic well-being of all our girls and schools, and the IJ community, is imprinted in us all.

Sister D embodied values that have inspired generations of our IJ girls and CJC graduands. These values included: resilience, fortitude, understanding, tolerance, empathy, and respect for all, especially the needy and the common man.

Under Sister D's stewardship over the last 22 years, the Principals, Teachers and our IJ Schools have benefitted immeasurably from her guiding hand, forged from a lifetime of genuine and selfless service.

Sister D was the epitome of generosity, humility, warmth and compassion. Her quick wit and timely comebacks were always impressive. The experiences over the years of many of us with Sister D have been that she was an extremely caring and compassionate soul who loved everyone and who always put everyone else above herself.



Provincialate : 4A Chestnut Drive, Singapore 679330. ***Tel: 67621910*** ***website: www.chij-sisters.org***



She had a demeanour and touch that made us feel special.

All of us on the Board fully associate ourselves with the touching and meaningful eulogies delivered at the funeral Mass by Vivienne Lim, Sean La'Brooy and Donne Aeria (our ex-Chairperson of the IJ Board).

It has been a privilege and honour for each and every one of us on the Board to have known and worked closely with Sister D. She has left an indelible legacy with very fond thoughts and warm memories. Hers was a life very well-lived. She has been an inspiration to each and every one of us on the Board and well-loved by us. We honour her for her exemplary life of duty and service to us and the whole IJ community. She was a Supervisor par excellence.

All of us will miss Sister D terribly, not only as the Supervisor, Mentor, and Confidant, but also as an extremely lovely person who has always been there as a beacon of light and compassion.

In closing, may I say:

Sister D had given her life to God,
faithfully placing her gifts and talents
at His Service.

I am sure we can all well imagine,
Jesus welcoming her
at the gates of Paradise
with these beautiful words:

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"Well done, good and faithful servant,

enter into my joy."

(Matthew 25:21).

Mr Hamsah Moosa and the IJ Board: 24 Aug 2016

Tribute from the IJ Sisters



IJ Sisters at Chijmes chapel in 1996

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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 unfailing 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.



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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."

Infant Jesus Sisters, Singapore *(founded in France, 1662, established in Singapore 1854*



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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 & IJ Sisters 31 Aug 2016)

Funeral Mass and Eulogies

1 **Link to the funeral mass with the eulogies presented by CHIJ St Joseph's Convent**

https://tinyurl.com/SrDeirdre

Vol 1: Photographs Vols 2 and 3: Video recording of the entire proceeding Vol 4: edited versions of the event and the 5 eulogies

2 **Link to the montage in memory of Sr. Deirdre presented by CHIJ Kellock during the funeral mass**



SisterD_Photo_Montage_17Aug.mp4

3 **Link to the Straits Times' write-ups on Sr Deirdre**

Pioneering educator-nun dies at 83, Singapore News & Top Stories ...

www.straitstimes.com/singapore/pioneering-educator-nun-dies-at-83

Aug 16, 2016 - **Sister Deirdre O'Loan**, a former principal of Catholic Junior College and supervisor of the 11 Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) schools,...

4 Memorial Mass in Sep 2017

http://CHIJ-sisters.org/writeups/7SrDMonth'sMindSep2016.pps

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.

John O'Donohue

With Archbishop Chia 2013

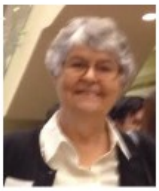














Some pictures of Sr D