



**“Before I formed you in the womb
I knew you through and through,
I chose you to be mine.”**

Psalm 139

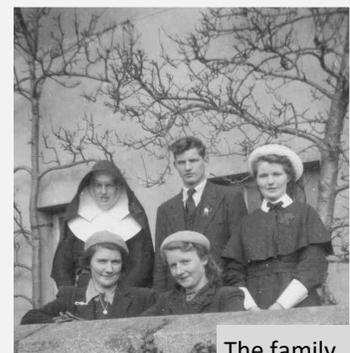
Eulogy by Sr. Monica Delaney

on 2 March 2017 at the Requiem Mass in
Franciscan Convent, Ballinasloe, Ireland.

We have just heard Jesus say in the gospel, that **those who abide in him, bear much fruit.** We all know that Ann lived deeply in Jesus and **she bore much fruit.** We are all witness to this. Ann’s own choice of Scripture readings, her hymns and psalm reflect very beautifully her deep love of God and her passion for Christ. The responsorial psalm echoed God’s own words: **Before I formed you in the womb I knew you through and through, I chose you to be mine.**

Angela and Maria, Ann’s own sisters, offer us these insights into Ann’s early years.....

Ann was the second youngest of a family of five children. She was born in Touraneena, County Waterford. This area is rich in Gaelic culture with a love for the Irish language and famous for Irish dancing especially set dancing. Ann grew up in this lovely rural countryside and she loved to walk through the fields and pick wild flowers. She enjoyed a happy carefree childhood and attended the local national school. When she was 12 years old she went to secondary school at the Mercy Convent in Dungarvan as a boarder. Here she made new friends, some of whom joined our Congregation, among them, Eileen Byrne and Carmel Spratt who are with us today.



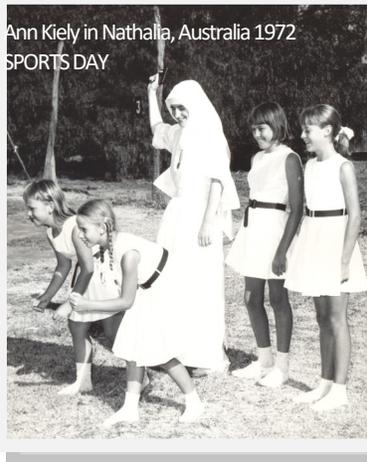
The family



Rags

Maria recalls an incident from Ann’s early years when her cousin Therese took Ann to Waterford. On the way they saw a dog lying on the roadside. He was still there a couple of hours later when they were on their way home. So Ann, with her love for all God’s creation, couldn’t bear to leave the dog on the road so she brought him home and Maria discovered a dog under her bed next morning! Ann nursed the dog back to full health and called him ‘Rags’. Rags was part of the family for many years afterwards.

I think this story shows how Ann was destined to be a Franciscan and it was a blessing for us when she chose to be an FMDM. Ann began her FMDM life here in Ballinasloe in 1955. She was then sent to England for Novitiate, first profession and teacher training.



Ann was now equipped to **be missioned by the Lord to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.**" This happened in January 1961 when Ann was chosen as one of the four sisters to form a community which was to start a Primary school in Nathalia, Australia.

Nathalia was a small town in rural Australia, predominantly a dairy farming area so most of the children came in from the surrounding farms. The primary school was called St. Mary of the Angels and it started with about 120 children.

Sisters Maureen Banyard, Josie Lanigan and Cecilia were all founder members of the community with Ann, and Maureen says that Ann was a born teacher with an abundance of kindness. Consequently, with the increase of a number of our sisters all bringing their own gifts and talents, the school grew from being a small Primary school to being the flourishing Primary and Secondary school that it is today. If you wish to know more of this period of Ann's life, several of our sisters who lived through these years with Ann, are here with us today, they will be very happy to fill in more details for you.



We have also had many e mails giving testimony to the **lasting fruit** mentioned in the gospel, because once word of Ann's sickness reached the ears of the people from Nathalia, e mails have been pouring in. One such e mail came from **Kevin Bourke**, a first cousin of our Sister, Marie Bourke...I quote...

I think back to 1961 when these young girls came out here to very remote Nathalia, leaving their families and loved ones behind in order to attempt to educate us heathens, who in the majority did not realise the sacrifice these young girls had made, in order to improve our lives. It is only as we have got older and stopped to think of the sacrifice and the fantastic work these young girls achieved, then we look at the Great Legacy they have left with two schools here in Nathalia. Please could you pass on my regards to a truly fantastic Lady, who I am sure will have no trouble getting through those Pearly Gates, and pass on my thoughts, which will undoubtedly be reflected by many others.

Angela, Ann's sister, has been reading these emails to Ann and she has also gathered them into a file for others to read. You will find the file outside the chapel – and I hear there are many more e mails still to be added.

Ann's years in Australia were life-giving for her. As a free spirit she loved the people, the open spaces and the wonderful outdoor life. However, her time there came to a sudden end when she attended our 1989 General Chapter and was elected to our General Council.



Leaving Australia after 28 years nearly broke Ann's heart but her commitment to the call of God and our FMDM life, meant that she embraced this new call to leadership with her whole being, in spite of the cost.

And cost it was! After serving for 6 years on the General Council Ann was elected Congregational Leader on the very day that her brother Jim died. The three sisters, Angela, Maria and Ann all loved Jim, their only brother, and Ann's very first act on being elected Congregational Leader was to help arrange Jim's funeral. This funeral naturally brought back memories of the death of their sister Marjorie, 13 years previously, so today we are especially with you, **Angela and Maria** as you now say goodbye to your dear sister, Ann.

To return to 1995 and to use Ann's own words on leadership, she **led from behind**. She chose a very simple style of leadership, warm and homely putting everyone at ease with her gentleness. She never put herself forward and she was accepting of everyone. Wherever she went, she was simply 'one of us' fitting into community as a real sister among sisters.

There was a strong perfectionist streak in Ann which enabled her to achieve a great deal but which was something we could also tease her about. Whenever there were community chores to be distributed, Ann always volunteered for the kitchen making even the oldest pots shine like new.

I am told that when Ann went on Visitation around the Congregation, certain communities would smile as they would know they would be sure to have a spotless kitchen before Ann left, cleaned from top to bottom by Ann herself.

However, Visitations were not only about cleaning kitchens! During Ann's years in leadership **one of her deepest desires was for us all to truly live by the Word of God, as St. Francis' lived.** She encouraged a custom, which has continued in many communities, of selecting a phrase from the Scripture of the Day, to be pondered and lived in the reality of our lives.



If Ann imitated St Francis in her love for sacred scripture, she also imitated him in the way **she embodied the peace of Christ**. We could almost say that peace was Ann's hallmark. It gave her an ease with people that was totally non-threatening and made her a true peace maker in many difficult situations.

Like Francis, Ann also radiated joy. She was a free spirit. Laughter and humour coupled with a deep **joy** made the words of Jesus in today's gospel, come alive when he says "*I have told you the Good News so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete.*" Ann's **joy** in her Lord was certainly complete. Christ was her all. Loving Christ and St Francis as she did, Ann loved both God's people and his creation in a very uncluttered way. The simplest thing gave Ann joy. So often after a long walk Ann would return carrying a bunch of wild flowers or a wisp of grass, just as she had done as a child in the fields near her home.

Leadership is never without suffering and Ann prayed her way through her years in leadership. She was up early every morning praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Every decision small or great was made in the context of real prayer.

On completing her 12 years as Congregational Leader Ann was missioned to Zimbabwe as Directress of Novices. At 72 years of age, this was a total change for Ann but one she embraced with courage and humility. Ann loved being with the young in the Novitiate, she loved the people of Zimbabwe, their culture and simplicity of life.



Ann's final mission, as we know, was here in Ireland, having served God's people for 59 years outside her own country. Ann was totally committed to her responsibility on the Regional Council and she supported Kathleen in every possible way. She gave herself wholeheartedly even though the time was so short.



Sadly, in December 2015 Ann, as we know, was diagnosed with cancer and there followed a painful period of demanding treatment. Ann faced all this suffering with her characteristic acceptance and continued her work for the Region with every ounce of her energy until she bravely accepted that it was time to let go and transfer here to our Franciscan Convent.

Many of us thought that God was going to call Ann home in August of last year, but God had other plans. He gave Ann a period of temporary remission which Ann used to the full, peacefully communicating with sisters, family and friends world-wide and even entering into community life as much as her failing health would permit. **But just about a month ago,** it became clear that this time, God was actually calling Ann home.

Maria and Angela, and many here present, faithfully supported Ann with love and prayer during her final weeks with us and were blessed with the fact that Ann was alert almost to the end. Throughout her illness, Ann's peaceful, prayerful presence was a gift to all who visited.

Towards the very end, all the sisters and staff of Franciscan Convent gathered around Ann's bed and prayed and sang Ann into heaven. One of the staff who was present said that **the peace was so tangible – it was like heaven already.**

Turning our thoughts to heaven...I am confident that Ann is continuing to pray for us all with love. So, to end this reflection, I invite you to hear in your heart Ann herself praying for each one of us, the prayer she herself chose for today's Liturgy.

***I pray that you may have the power
to comprehend with all the saints,
what is the breadth and the length,
the height and the depth,
and to know the love of Christ
that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled
with all the fullness of God.***



may the road
rise to meet you,
may the wind
always be at your back,
may the sun
shine warm upon your face,
may the rains
fall softly upon your fields...

(Irish blessing)

***Thank you Ann
for the way you have helped
each of us to know a little more
about the fullness of God's love.***
