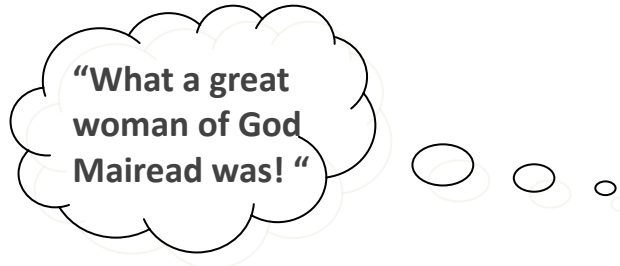

Sister Mairead Hynes FMDM

A LIFE REMEMBERED

5 November 1915 —20 September 2015



Sharing by Sister Mary Burke on the life of Sr. Mairead

Almost every detail of today's Mass was planned by Mairead herself including her request that I do this eulogy. I feel honoured to be able to fulfil that request. As you would expect, she gave me some instructions, one being not to speak for too long! But how can one speak briefly about almost one hundred years of a wonderful life of faith and love. Mairead also asked for a joyful celebration and I think we are certainly giving her that!

For those of us gathered here and all who knew and loved Mairead, we gather with both joy and sadness, joy because she is now embraced totally in the mystery of God's love, and sadness because her life has touched us so many ways that there is an empty space in our hearts today. Perhaps there is not an empty space, rather our hearts are filled with love, our love for Mairead, and, her love for us.

In the last months of her life Mairead felt she had been given a gift. This gift is expressed in the picture on the front of her Mass booklet. For as the mother holds the child with great tenderness in that picture so she felt, she too, was held in the tenderness and love of God. This deep and tender love of God was a great blessing for her when life was physically hard.

Mairead was born in Derrycastle in Co Mayo on November 5th 1915, one of a family of seven. She had three sisters and three brothers, often spoken of, and dearly loved by Mairead and all rejoicing with her today in Heaven. Her father, Pat worked seasonally in England and they had a small farm which Catherine, her mother and indeed all the family worked hard on. Mairead as we know had a great sense of style. She told me of a time when her Father returned from England and brought her a new red coat, double breasted with large buttons and the envy of every other child in her village. Though she remembered the coat fondly, Mairead's greater memory was the sacrifice and love of her father in giving her such a gift, when money was so scarce. Mairead also spoke lovingly of her mother, who she said, was a strong woman, both physically and in her life of faith, a gift she passed on to all her children including Mairead.

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“What a great woman of God Mairead was!”



Sharing by Sister Mary Burke on the life of Sr. Mairead

Mairead left Ireland in 1936 and came to Mount Alvernia, Guildford as a Postulant. During her Religious life she served the Lord and his people in England, Zimbabwe, Italy, Syracuse, Gibraltar and Australia. Most of her working life was spent preparing food for those who were ill, providing nourishing dishes for students and priests, always done to the best of her ability, **precisely**, and with a genuine desire to give her best wherever she found herself. In her earlier days in religious life Mairead had to work hard with little resources, as well as coping with her own ill health. Yet, she was a woman who grew in deep love of Christ though the very ordinary and sometimes difficult circumstances of her life.

Though missioned to many other countries, Mairead never returned to live or work in Ireland. When she returned to England, she loved to spend time with her family both here in England and in Ireland.

She delighted in attending and receiving photos of family celebrations, of weddings and get-togethers and enjoyed meeting up and keeping track of the achievements and lives of her many nieces and nephews as well as keeping up with the next generations activities.

We are none of us perfect and Mairead also had a weakness or two. She could be very direct and certainly on matters of justice, she would always speak up for those who could not do so for themselves. She was also a humble woman and when she felt she was wrong she would apologise sometimes, with tears, because though she had a passion for justice, in her heart she also wanted to love each person as fully as she could and not hurt anyone.

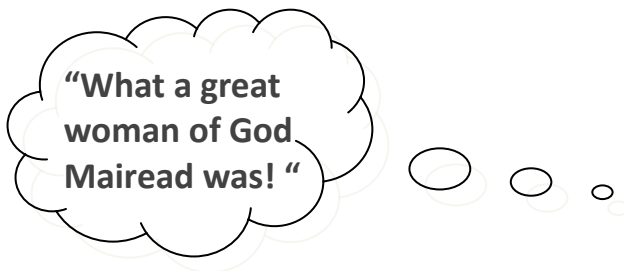
As we all know Mairead had a special love for priests and seminarians. This love found real expression in homely ways during her years working in the Beda College in Rome. One such practical expression of this love was that when the students asked for English sausages, Mairead deciding that only the best would do, wrote to the Walls, the famous company asking for their recipe. They did indeed give it to her with the instruction that she did not reveal it to anyone and did not use it in England. To the best of my knowledge the secret is still with Walls and with Mairead!

Two particularly special people for Mairead during her time in Rome were Carlo and Orlanda. Mairead seeing Carlo's potential when he was a young boy, took him under her wing and taught him all she knew. When Mairead left the Beda, Carlo was able to take over the whole of the catering and he and Orlanda, by then his wife, worked there efficiently and well for over forty years. You could say Mairead's influence and encouragement here was life-changing. Even in her later years she continued to pass on her skills, to many others including, our own Sr. Annette and Scott here in La Verna. When Scott was new she instructed him very clearly in the **proper** and possibly **the only way** to make good scrambled egg!

Sister Mairead Hynes FMDM

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Sharing by Sister Mary Burke on the life of Sr. Mairead

After many years of work in catering, Mairead was given the opportunity to undertake Franciscan Studies in Canterbury. Mairead proved to be an excellent student, I have been told she never took a note during a lecture, and when she came out from the lecture, such was her memory and intellect that she could write up what had been said almost word for word. Mairead also loved good conversation and could express her point of view **quite** firmly, with both conviction and humour.

After Canterbury Mairead spent time in our community in Clapham before going; **in her seventies, I might add**, to Australia. This was a life-giving time for Mairead and this is where we first met. She was well known and loved in the parish of Nathalia where she made her way around on her bicycle to visit many elderly and lonely people. Always hospitable and practically efficient she welcomed those who came generously and they always left having been listened to, and nourished in body and spirit. Mairead left Australia in 1993 returning to England where she joined the community at La Verna.

Writing in her own words at that time Mairead said her desire was to *'serve my sisters as long as the Lord allows me'*. She also said she was **'enjoying the hundredfold'** and that she wanted to be a *'prayerful and loving presence in community.'*

In more recent years Mairead endured a lot of physical suffering, and, sometimes she found this hard, together with the lack of independence which was by then a part of her daily life. She was stoic in her suffering especially when she broke her neck badly. Again, she did warn me not to spend a lot of time on this aspect of her life; she said she wanted us to see and remember the joy in her life.

A good listener she had a keen interest in the lives of the sisters and staff in La Verna. She would offer advice, **sometimes liberally, sometimes sparingly, almost always wisely**. She genuinely took the joys and sorrows of others into her big heart and she was always grateful for the loving care she received.

In recent times it was a joy to visit Mairead as she surrendered as much as she could to the Lord, her health, her independence and her ability to do many things for herself. When I visited her she would often say; ***'I am waiting' for the Lord to come and I know when he comes it will be like being held in a beautiful embrace.'***

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On day before she died, Mairead’s niece Mary came to visit. Mary, she told me on the Thursday before you came, she wanted to be well enough to chat to, and listen to you. She was so pleased you were coming and the few hours you spent with her gave her much delight. I would say that her desire to welcome you represented the love she felt, not only for you, but for all her family and your visit and conversation brought her close to the members of her family who could not be with her.

Mairead surrendered her life peacefully to God on September 20th having told Moira she was going for a ‘long sleep’. She had surrendered her Spirit and her Heart to him over and over again in life, growing into the beautiful woman we all appreciated, loved and learned so much from.

A very special woman has gone to her reward, a strong woman, faithful and faith filled, at times gentle and at other times vulnerable, an upright woman who sought justice and who sought the Lord with all her Heart. We remember Mairead with gratitude and love, and we give thanks that she has now found, and is being held in the Greatest love of all - The Love of Christ.

Finally I would like to bless Mairead with our traditional Irish farewell. It means -

‘May your noble and faithful soul be at God’s right hand’.

Mairead, Ar dheis De go raibh do H’anaim Dilis.



Farewell Mairead

‘May your noble and faithful soul be at God’s right hand’.