

Appreciation for Sr. Catherine McManus RIP

Sr. Kitty as she became known in the latter part of her life, asked me some time ago to give the appreciation of her life at her funeral and what a life that has been! It is one full to the brim of various ministries, love of family, her communities, and engagement with people of all walks of life. She gave herself wholeheartedly to her vocation as a religious sister and lived life to the full. This was enabled by her close relationship with her Loving God. She was a great prayer and never forgot those for whom she was asked for prayer. Towards the end of her life Kitty prayed frequently for her own and all families. She knew the importance of family life.

Catherine, or Kitty as she was affectionately called by her family, was born into a large Dublin family of two boys and eight girls. Very sadly her mother died when she was very young. Her eldest sister Gertie took over the role of mother which she did with great love cherishing her younger sisters. Towards the end of her life Kitty spoke a great deal about her father. She spoke so lovingly and appreciatively of him. She said he would gather his young daughters around him in the evening and read to them. From him Kitty learnt a great respect for books and described how he handled them. She became a great reader herself. Her father died when she was in her teenage years leaving a huge gap in her life.

Kitty was educated by the Irish Sisters of Charity whose foundress Mary Aikenhead made her novitiate in York with another Dublin woman, Frances Ball, who brought Mary Ward's foundation to Dublin. It was however to the Ascot community that Kitty made her way on 1st March 1945, and where she remained for 23 years. She was joined four years later by her younger sister Sheila. Her training and the skills she acquired in running the refectory or cooking were put to great use when with her sister Sheila she made a homely and

welcoming community in Cambridge Road with Bishop John Crowley who is celebrating the Mass for her today.

After her time in Ascot, Kitty joined the Cambridge community. Here she spread her wings doing various courses and working pastorally which she continued in York. For a time, she worked in a children's home in Leeds. Here she met fourteen-year-old Debbie and her baby daughter Sarah. Kitty became a second Mother to both nurturing them to adulthood. Debbie continued to keep in touch and visited Kitty frequently in the latter years and is with us today. Kitty was also involved in the parish life of English Martyrs visiting the sick, making innumerable friends and supporting the extended parish community. All the above experience was also great preparation when she was called, along with her sister to join Bishop John and the Middlesbrough Diocese. Here she threw herself into all the ministries God asked of her, supporting Bishop John, the priests of the diocese and all the people in the parishes. These were very happy years.

On her retirement from the diocese, Kitty remained active when she was moved to London, first to Hampstead where she helped with the move to a smaller house in Willesden Lane. She took up parish ministry again in Quex Road. Ill health brought her to St. Joseph's Community in York 2015 where she made a good recovery. Letter writing and keeping in touch with her many friends became her main activity as well as welcoming them in person when they came to visit. With the death of her last remaining sister ETTY, Kitty felt bereft and left behind. She longed to join her family and see God face to face. This happened very peacefully in the presence of her niece Catherine and two nurses on 13th November.

Here are a few quotations we received on Kitty's death; from the sisters at Thicket "She'll undoubtedly leave a gap in St. Josephs and indeed in the lives of all who knew and loved her especially Bishop John and we keep you all in our prayers at this time as you

give her back to God. God bless you all with a great sense of rejoicing that Kitty, is now reunited with Sheila and “heavenly housekeeping” will be well taken care of in great style!”, and from Colette who Kitty knew at Hampstead: “ She was always kind to me and I enjoyed our little chat with a cuppa in Hampstead and our phone calls later in York. I was very fond of her.”

Thank you, Kitty, for all the joy and friendship you gave to so many people, now rest in peace.

Ann Stafford CJ November 2025