

## *Sister Miriam Bruder, SSND - 60 Year Jubilee!*



*"Called to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are – in every place, in every time, in every situation."*

*YAS C 9.*

When I think back over my 60 years as a School Sister of Notre Dame, first as a member of the Canadian Province and now as part of the Atlantic Midwest Province, I am grateful for many things given me by SSND. Two that come to mind are the many opportunities to deepen the grace of that initial call some 60 years ago through retreats, workshops, study, and life in community and the opportunity to study theology in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II were both profound and cherished gifts. Another gift to highlight is a certain expansiveness of vision, nurtured by the Province's global awareness programmes and missionary initiatives in Latin America and among Aboriginal Canadians. Belonging to an international congregation has been such a positive influence on my life. As a result, I have always felt that I was part of something larger, whether in my early years of classroom teaching and youth retreats, twenty years of community service in formation and leadership or twenty-three years of parish ministry, one in my home town of Waterloo, Ontario; one in La Paz, Bolivia and the rest here in England where I now serve in a parish in London.

My most cherished memories of living our charism through parish ministry, are from my

time in Blessed Sacrament Parish, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. One hallmark of that time was working together with the Anglican church in our area in prayer, witness and action.

"Called to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are – in every place, in every time, in every situation," (YAS C 9) has become the touchstone of parish ministry for me. In my present parish, Blessed Sacrament in London, working together with parishioners and the parish priest to plan the parish centenary celebration in 2016 was a meaningful experience of this communion-making.

A memorable example of this took place in 2005 in the local Anglican Church, St. Helen's. The event combined the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the death of Oscar Romero and the "Make Poverty History" campaign. It involved an educational display and a creative prayer service which concluded with a commissioning of several of our parishioners who, along with Sister Colette Ryan and me, were going to Edinburgh for the UK Make Poverty History rally. Having been blessed by the participants, we took with us signs of their solidarity with us. The consolation of this event was not

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only the experience of the unity for which we strive, but also the pride in the global awareness of the parishioners.

When, in 2008, it was time for me to move on after eleven years and for SSND to leave Barnsley after seventeen years, the farewell celebration holds the fondest memory. That the celebration was planned by a cross-section of parishioners who had come together, setting their known differences aside, was a most affirming gift. The whole event poignantly demonstrated the people's recognition of our community in mission among them. During the liturgy a candle was lit for each Sister who had served there and a final candle for the SSND's who had visited the parish and those who supported it from afar. The gifts presented all had symbolic value; for example, an icon of the Trinity for spiritual accompaniment and some alternative gifts for developing countries representing the call to justice and peace. The final gift was a 'bespoke' (custom-made) black bowl with gold oak leaf motif on which was inscribed: "The Barnsley Sisters – inspirational women who will live forever in our hearts. Grateful, prayerful thanks from the people of Blessed Sacrament" On the underside are the names of all the Sisters who served there. One bowl, they said, was to be taken to Notre Dame Convent, Waterdown, and a replica was placed in the church.

As I celebrate this jubilee, I am grateful to our faithful God who has been my companion and the giver of so many gifts through SSND.