



# **Celebration Mass of Thanksgiving for the life of Sister Joseph Crowe RJP 29<sup>th</sup> June 1922 – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011**



**Friday February 18<sup>th</sup> 2011**

**Father Victor Vella, Parish Priest, welcomed Sister Joseph's family, friends and the Sisters of Mercy. He also welcomed Canon John McNamara, Fr Jim Tolhurst, Fr Alex Saba, Fr Richard Bickerstaff, Deacon Barry Chalkley and Deacon James Burleigh. Deacon Austin Martin was not able to attend through illness, but sent expressions of sympathy.**

The Liturgy of the Word was especially chosen by Father Victor and Sister Joseph's companion Sisters. Their insight had come from the homily that the Holy Father gave at St Peter's on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2011 on the occasion of the World Day of Consecrated Life, which is observed on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord; this feast was chosen by the Venerable John Paul II to celebrate the annual Day of Consecrated Life.

**The underlying thought in both the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading & the Gospel evokes Sr Joseph's consecrated life: CALL FOR MISSION/VOCATION FOR MISSION**

**Isaiah 42: 1-8: *The Song of the Servant of the Lord – A Piece of Hebrew Poetry***

*Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights.  
I have endowed him with my spirit that he may bring true justice to the nations.  
He does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets.  
He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame.  
Faithfully he brings true justice; he will neither waver nor be crushed  
until true justice is established on earth, for the islands are awaiting his law.  
Thus says God, the Lord, he who created the heavens and spread them out,  
who gave shape to the earth and what comes from it,  
who gave breath to his people and life to the creatures that move in it:*

*I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right:  
I have taken you by the hand and formed you:  
I have appointed you as covenant of the peoples and light of the nations,  
to open the eyes of the blind,  
to free captives from prison and those in darkness from the dungeon.  
My name is the Lord, I will not yield my glory to another, nor my honour to idols.*

### **Highlights of Father Victor's homily**

**Sister Joseph** was **gentle** but **firm**. This gentleness and firmness was steeped in her firm belief she had been called to a mission.

The first few lines of the Hebrew poem are the definition of the servant and his mission. Though written for the people of Israel, as chosen by God to be his servant, the words apply to every Christian in their life in whatever vocation they follow.

**Gentleness** does not mean being nice, the biblical/Isaiahian definition is:

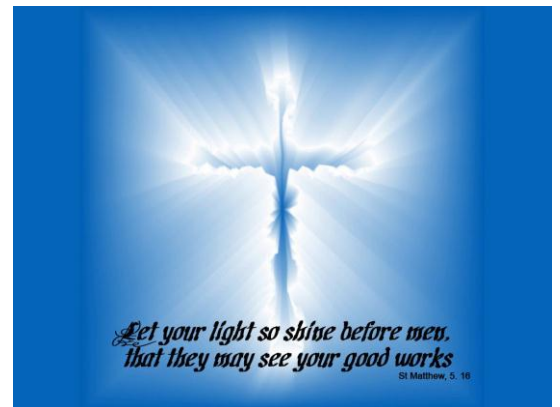
*“it does not cry out or shout aloud, or make his voice heard in the streets. He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame.”*

That is the definition of gentleness by which Sister Joseph tried to live out her mission of her consecrated life. Many were touched by her gentleness; Fr. Victor said, *“When we were bruised or crushed, she was there for us.”* If a smouldering wick or a wavering flame, they were enhanced and made aglow by Sister Joseph. That is the gentleness Fr. Victor was talking about. Yet she was **firm** and would neither waver nor be crushed till justice was achieved for all. Fr. Victor spoke of often seeing her firmness and passionate discussions which were beyond description on faith, pastoral matters and politics. Even with the other Sisters she would stand her ground, spelling out her argument with unflinching determination.

Father Victor then referred to the Gospel reading chosen from **Matthew 5: v 13-16**

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a candle to put it under a tub: they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house.*

*In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven.”*



Father continued saying people who try to be the ‘Salt of the Earth’ and ‘Light of the World’, may appear stubborn, like **St. Teresa of Avila** and **St. Catherine of Sienna** and indeed many of the prophets. This gentleness and firmness produced balanced conversations and were not extreme. This gentleness and firmness were steeped in Sister Jo’s determination and belief that she had been called to mission. As Isaiah said, *“I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right; I have taken you by the hand and formed you; I have appointed you as covenant of the peoples and light of the nations...”* Isaiah powerfully describes by using four

verbs the constituent parts of a vocation namely, we are **called, taken by our hand**, that is, supported by the Lord, **formed** and **appointed**. We are appointed to be a covenant, a source/means of unity/reconciliation, between humanity and God as we live the life of a servant.

The second reading from the First Letter of St Peter noted: *“Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with clear conscience...”* (3:25-16) When an opportunity arose, Sr. Joseph would give the reason to those who asked her for the hope she had. She kept engaging in faith discussions to the end, including with her surgeon and carers. However, in her conversation she would have showed courtesy, respect and a clear conscience.

Sr. Joseph was the epitome of someone who consecrated her life for the Word. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the World day of Consecrated life, the Holy Father said that consecrated life is expected to reproduce in the world Christ as chaste, poor and obedient. Sr. Joseph endeavoured to reproduce these characteristics of Christ; she was indeed an icon, the image of Christ. For this we thank the Lord for her exemplary life.

### **Words of Tribute by Sister Deirdre Byrne**

Sister Deidre spoke of Sister Joseph’s early life with a loving family in Dublin. She would spend time meeting the young women in the red light district seeking them a refuge in the Legion of Mary Hostel for the night. She left to become a Sister of Mercy at the age of thirty. Coming from a close family in a beautiful city of Dublin, she was assigned to the bleak small island of Alderney only three miles long and one-and-the-half miles wide and showing grotesque remains of the invasion in World War 11. It was a courageous act of faith to leave home to go to a very lonely place; the girl who came with her left after only a few months, leaving Sister Joseph as the only postulant and young person amongst the Sisters. Having faced and coped with many changes during her consecrated life, Sister Joseph spent 36 years living in the community in Guernsey before going to Whitstable for one year and then Orpington where she lived for nearly 18 years., where many benefited from her ministry. She lived by the words.....

**“There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength.”**

**St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians 4:13**

**Sister Joseph is remembered with great love and affection. May she rest in peace.**