

Theresa Kilmurray's Address at the Launch of Dr Ann Power's Book

"It's wonderful to see so many people gathered here on this cold December night to celebrate with Dr. Ann Power this auspicious occasion of her book launch *"The Brigidine Sisters in Ireland, America, Australia and New Zealand- 1807-1922"*.

Bishop Denis Nulty, an t-Athair Con O'Maoldomnaigh, Fr. John McEvoy, Br. Camillus Regan, the Power family, Brigidine Sisters and friends we are guaranteed an evening that will whet our appetites for this beautifully written and produced historical account of the first 115 years of the Brigidine Congregation.

Ann, through the depth and breadth of her meticulous research, her journeys to Australia in the footsteps of the pioneer sisters and through her interviews and attention to detail has captured the vicissitudes of a small faith filled group of very "ordinary" women who were inspired by the vision of Bishop Delany to spread the good news through the education of rich and poor alike. His far-sighted vision and committed action in the education and formation of lay catechists and social outreach continue to have relevance for our Church and world today.

The book highlights the lives, courage and spirit of a small group of dedicated women in rural areas navigating their way through many obstacles that impeded their growth and expansion. I found Ann's observations riveting as she highlighted the anomalies and challenges that faced this courageous group of women. I am *not* going to outline these anomalies as I know that you will find this story fascinating when you read this history.

Ann's honest appraisal of the formation and structures within religious life at this time confront us with some of the harsh realities of institutional religious life. She also records the spirit of adventure of the Brigidines, the hardships they endured, hidden from the public eye and their significant achievements as a force for change in Catholic education in Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. She contrasts the difference between the perceived failures and the success of the different pioneering endeavours. She attributes the success of the expansion in Australia to support from the motherhouse and the support of the bishops, priests and people who received them.

Ann, on behalf of the Brigidine Sisters I want to express our sincere gratitude to you. It's hard to believe that it was back in 2008 that you sought permission to use our archives for your PHD research which has culminated in the publishing of this informative history. Without a doubt you have worked tirelessly and methodically to get to this day. This book bears testament to your perseverance, enthusiasm and academic prowess. This early history of the Brigidine Congregation ensures that we can take our rightful place alongside the larger and better-known Congregations. Like the veterans of World War 1 "we shall not be forgotten". Through your book, those of us who are Brigidines will have the privilege of revisiting the facts and emotions associated with this period of our challenging history. As we face the future we are blessed to have this foundational work to enrich our heritage. In the words of George Bernard Shaw "we are made wise not by the recollections of our past, but by the responsibilities for our future". Ann, you have reminded us through our early Brigidines and pioneering women the importance of courage and tenacity in responding to

the needs of our time just as Bishop Delany and these valiant women did in their time. May we like them, in the words of Bishop Delany quoting Frances De Sales continue to “do ordinary things extraordinarily well”.

Thank you!”

Theresa Kilmurray CSB Carlow College 3rd. December 2018



Theresa Kilmurray csb, Dr Ann Power, Fr John McEvoy, Bishop Denis Nulty

(Photo by Kay Mulhall csb)