

Called to do things differently

Our ministries established by Religious Sisters began with a clear vision, a starting point founded in the needs of the time. It was a dynamic response that enabled adaptability to guide the way. Their work was focussed on the people they served. Their intention was not to build organisations or compete for market share with other service providers. They were simply doing the work God called them to do.

Our Catholic ministries are not called to do different things. Hospitals care for the sick, schools educate their students, community services deliver much-needed help, aged care centres care for and support the elderly BUT each of our Catholic ministries are called to do things differently.

The key to doing things differently is to build and sustain relationships – an integrated relational way of discerning in communion with others, engaged with the world that extends relationships, presence and agency into the wider community, whilst always maintaining God's presence in the world.

When we look at Jesus' ministry and the ministries founded by Nano Nagle, Catherine McAuley and Elizabeth Hayes – they were all done differently due to the audience and culture of the time. Their approaches, methods and resources were as diverse and unique as the people themselves, but their mission was the same and they understood their purpose.

Today, "nurturing, clarifying, and defending this purpose is the chief responsibility of those in the

board room. It is their most sacred task. Board members...must be the most passionate about the full mission of the organisation. If they aren't, conflict about the Christian distinction of the organisation will eventually surface. (Greer and Horst, 2014, p77 and 84)

When what we do drifts away from God's mission, things start to go wrong. What we do in our ministries – the organising, the educating, the formation, the care-giving, the hospitality, the individual and community service – is all part of God's mission.

Our connectedness and God's mission is described beautifully in the hymn of Saint Francis of Assisi, where he expresses praise to God in gratitude for our 'brothers' and 'sisters' sun, moon, stars, wind, water, and fire. In finding God through them and praising God with them, our relationship of service brings great glory to God (LS 87).

Let us continue to do things differently by focussing on those we serve. May the following words of Pope Francis guide your way:

"Serving means caring ... for the vulnerable of our families, our society, our people" (Homily in Havana, 20 September 2015). In this outreach, all are "called to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable... Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, 'suffers' that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people" (ibid.) (39th World Day Of The Sick 2021).

Before the needs of our brothers and sisters, Jesus.. asks us to stop and listen, to establish a direct and personal relationship with others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them (cf. Lk 10:30-35).

Message Of His Holiness Pope Francis
for the XXIX World Day Of The Sick 2021

REFLECTION

How are things done differently in your ministry?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.