



OBITUARY

Sr Brenda Nestor OP

20.03.1924 - 21.12.2019



My greatest blessing has been
the birth of my son (s and daughters).
My next greatest blessing has been
my ability to turn people into children of mine.

- Maya Angelou



Sr Brenda was born in County Mayo on the 20th March 1924 to Michael and Ellen Nestor. She was baptised Anne Mary. She grew up in a fun-loving family as one of nine children in a very Catholic home. Her mother and brothers were musical, enjoying Irish dancing. Right from school days, she was interested in going to Africa, and from a young age her vocation to religious life was nurtured. An Irish priest knew our Sr Theresa Thomas, and so Sr Brenda visited the community and entered the Congregation in Chingford. She made her First Profession there on the 16th May 1947, and her Final Profession in Oakford, South Africa, on the 10th July 1950.

Sr Brenda trained and qualified as a medical and surgical nurse, and mid-wife at the Benedictine Hospital in Nongoma, Zululand. She then served for 10 years in our Cala hospital, Umtata Diocese, in today's Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, and it took pride of place in her memory. It is, she noted, "Mandela's country", and some of his relatives were admitted as patients to the hospital. The local people were grateful for all nursing services they received. They had little money, and often said thank you with grass mats and live chickens. Facilities were rather primitive in the hospital, and the Sisters followed a very simple life-style. The local white Afrikaner families were very fond of the Sisters, offering them lifts to the nearest towns, East London or Queenstown.

Sr Brenda worked at Marymount for about 20 years, 10 of them as matron. She was a very gifted and intuitive midwife and often recognized complications in a delivery before these presented. Sr Brenda is 'credited with miracles' in the Labour Ward and saving lives in complicated situations. She introduced the practice of having husbands in labour wards, getting them to help monitor their wives. She loved the

babies she delivered; families brought "them" back on the occasions of first communion and confirmation and, in time, some went back to Marymount with their own babies.

Sr Brenda initially found it challenging to leave South Africa and return to England. After a sabbatical, she was again involved in nursing, in Burghwallis and later in Preston in a nursing home across the road from the convent. Later she began visiting people in the parish. When she moved to Pinner to be closer to her own sister in London who was not well, she continued with the visiting of families in trouble, hidden away in an elite area. After her move from Love Lane to Pinner House, she continued as sacristan for a while, but it became too difficult to continue. However, Sr Brenda had trained several assistants and soon they took responsibility for the Sacristy. At 90, she moved to the St Vincent's Nursing Home.

Being a good and faithful disciple, Sr Brenda's ministry continued, this time it was mostly to our Sisters at St Vincent's. Her mission was "to be patient, to try and understand others, to show Jesus' goodness to the poor."

She was very fond of the carers at St Vincent's, and took a personal interest in their lives - the countries they came from, their lives and families. Sr Brenda always generously expressed her gratitude for their services and how they cared for her and for our other Sisters in St Vincent's, too.

Sr Brenda believed in young people. She was clear that it is difficult for young people to understand the way of religious life she had known. Their understanding of commitment is different from what she had known. She knew that many of them, among them members of her own family, volunteer their services in different countries and locally to make a difference in the lives of people.

Sr Brenda had been present at many births, delivered babies herself and then she was able to 'turn people into her children'. She cared for the people and they often called into St Vincent's for a chat with her, and she'd be present to them, listening attentively ... and was able to tell many stories of her own!

We thank God for the gift of her life and her generosity at the service to and amongst us in

The Way, the Truth and the Life

RIP