

A WORD OF THANKS

28 February 2009: St Ignatius' Church, Richmond, Victoria, Australia

Sr Isabella Carlone, fdz at the Thanksgiving Mass on the 50th Anniversary of the Daughters of Divine Zeal in Australia



Good afternoon once more dearest friends. Mother General in her message to us FDZ expresses her closeness to all of us present today saying: *"this 50th anniversary gives us an opportunity to thank the Lord with grateful hearts for having given us the grace to carry out our mission for such a significant time."*

She also challenges us saying that we need *"to continue to be present with more awareness towards life and its commitment with the help of God and the support of the local Church and of the many of you Brothers and Sisters lay Collaborators, Friend and Benefactors"*.

Upon the invitation of Fr Nicola Tornese SJ, who at that time was the Italian Chaplain here in Parish of St Ignatius', the Daughters of Divine Zeal came to work for Italian families, the Children – both in the Child Minding Centre and for the care of the Orphans or Children from families in difficult situations.

Mother Longina Casale, the superior general of that time, in her circular letter dated February 5 1959 addressed to all FDZ, was asking us to pray for the first four Sisters, Gennarina from the States, Sr Colombina, Sr Virgilia, and Sr Beniamina who would be assigned in this vast and far continent. Late in the night between February 22 and 23, they left Rome and landed in Melbourne on February 25 they were welcomed by the Parish Priest of St Ignatius' and one Sister of St Joseph of Cluny. They were accompanied to the seminary of the Jesuits in Werribee, where they remained with the community, to later arrive in Richmond on February 28 1959.

As any other emigrants they experienced "fear" of the unknown, the pain and the longing of the warmth they had left behind in their native land, the obstacles of the language barrier – the important tool for communication and evangelization, and the different cultures. In a word they had to start anew. Nevertheless, they were full of hope in the One they had consecrated themselves to, to answer the cry of Jesus: *"the harvest is great but the labourers are few, pray the Lord of the harvest to sent labourers into his harvest"*.

From 1959 to the present, thirty-three Sisters have been assigned to here in Victoria – that is, in Richmond and Shepparton – and to Sydney, New South Wales. Some of these Sisters who have spent many of their years of life in Australia are here with us today: Sr Dolores Barletta, Sr Laura Bilato, Sr Isabel Franco, Sr Felicia Larocca, Sr Felicitas and Sr Elvira and myself. We are also honoured to have Sr Teresa Loviglio Vicar general, Sr Sineide das Chagas, General Councillor and in charge of the Missionary Sector, and for the first time, Srs Erlinda and Josefina from the Philippines.

On behalf of all the Congregation of the Daughters of Divine Zeal, especially of those here in Australia, I thank the principal Celebrant, Most Rev Bishop Christopher Prowse, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne who gladly accepted our invitation and inspired us with his homily; all the concelebrant Priests, especially our brothers, the Rogationists Fr Giorgio Nalin, Superior General, Fr Fortunato Siciliano and Fr Gabriel Flores, Secretary & General Councillor. I also thank those who came from Sydney, from Shepparton, and surrounding areas. A special thanks goes also to our own Priests of this Parish, Fr Stan Lim, Fr Geoffrey King and their fellow Jesuits; our Organist, Nancy Calo', the Choir Director Michael Lapina and the Two Hearts Choir and St Ignatius' Choir; and to all those who have helped to organise and make everything possible for us to enjoy the spirit of this celebration. To all of you friends, benefactors and acquaintances we heartily say: THANKS! We invite all of you to proceed to the Parish Hall for a short slideshow of images that represent the 50 years of history of the FDZ in Australia and for a program organised and choreographed by our friend Nelson, followed by a buffet meal for everyone.



During the last hymn, I ask all the Priests and Sisters to pose with the Bishop for a photograph to commemorate this very special day. *Congratulations to all of us!*