



Cared for by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

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On Easter Sunday morning we celebrate the fact that Jesus is risen and is alive. We have travelled with Jesus through this Lent in a way that none of us have ever known before. Little did we know that on Ash Wednesday we would have experienced such turmoil, such upheaval, such uncertainty. It was a Lent like no other.

Our ways are not God's ways and God's thoughts are not our thoughts! Where we see failure and sickness triumph, God sees the faithfulness of Jesus and the values of the Kingdom reign supreme. Through the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, God has shown and offered us a new way of living and confronting evil.

In the midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic we have seen such an outpouring of goodness, generosity, heroism and sheer goodness and generosity.

All of these have been signs of great hope. These are Gospel values and we have demonstrated them in abundance this Lent and into Easter and beyond.

We believe that having shared in the suffering of Jesus, we will now, or in the future, share in his new and everlasting life. This is the real meaning of Easter.

As you reflect back over the past few weeks when things were very unsettling and fearful think of one person you know who has shown great kindness and generosity.

Try to see this as a sign of hope, as a sign of resurrection.

Archdiocese of Armagh, Ireland

During these uncertain times I wish all our families a Blessed Easter at home, I would hold you all in my masses and prayers, God keep you and safe and well, please take care of each other and other families around you. This is our St Brigid's Community in action.

Fr Phil

Your prayers are requested for the following:

Other Deceased: Francis and Will Champion, June Ann Knight, McGlinn Family, Eileen and Paul McMahon, Kit Sanders, Barry Telford, Alma & Jack Saidey, Bill Jack, Jack Olde, Marie Cunningham, Brenda Dore, Essie, Heather and Patricia Scott, Michael Cremin, John Keane

Fr Phil will continue to offer private Mass for the intentions of parishioners (as listed above)

OLSH Randwick has excellent online Masses and liturgies :

Wollongong Diocese has excellent Sunday Mass at 9am each week:

Channel 7 will broadcast live from St Mary's Cathedral,

Good Friday Liturgy at 3pm and Easter Sunday Mass at 10.30am

A color portrait photograph of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair and bangs. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a light blue collared shirt with a small, dark pendant on a chain around her neck. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.



The flu slaughtered young and active adults as much as it did influenza's usual victims, the aged and young children. The poor, as usual, were particularly vulnerable. Undernourished and chronically stressed from overcrowding, financial anxiety and poor housing sanitation, they were at greater risk from this post-War pandemic. Twenty-first century concerns have resurrected the Great Flu narrative but for decades it was a story obscured by the First World War.

It's loss to cultural memory and a full place in the national story may have been due to the prevailing masculinist worldview. While defeat - such as Gallipoli -and wounds are legitimate sufferings of the hero, sickness is rarely if ever seen as heroic.

Yet the Influenza pandemic produced plentiful acts of heroism, including that of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor at Coogee (OLNP), founded in 1913 by young Irish Australians Eileen O'Connor (1892 -1921) and Edward McGrath, MSC. (1881 -1977) This grass roots (McGrath was a rookie priest, O'Connor a bed-ridden girl with a severe spinal disability) community had run into trouble with the clerical authorities within a few years of its founding. At the time of the Great Flu, the small group of nurses were living under very difficult financial and psychological circumstances – supported by their devout families and friends of the mystic O'Connor – but frozen out by ecclesiastical Sydney.

Considering the dangers of this flu, Eileen O'Connor had first sought the permission of the families of her nurses as to whether they could tend to influenza cases. When they had all agreed, the Home embarked on preparing gowns, caps and masks, while the Patrician Brothers of Holy Cross College sent their car from Ryde for sole use by the Nurses. Within two days the women were ready. Aided by at least two Marists, Brother Frank Malin and Fr Gilham, they worked non-stop for the first two weeks of April 1919 before five nurses, including Matron Sarah Hawkshaw, were struck down themselves with the flu.

Our Lady's Nurses had then to quarantine themselves. Eileen rang or wrote to all their worried families almost daily. Only Sarah Hawkshaw did not recover; she died on 22 April 1919. Her death was a great blow to the community. Nurse Kit McGrath wrote in her journal that Matron had given her life in 'helping to fight this dreadful disease. Our loss is indeed great and sadness and love fill our hearts and the hearts of many of our Poor. Where she will live until the end of our lives.'

When the other nurses got up from their sickbeds, Eileen, now acting as Matron, thought to give them all two months rest. But in June 1919 a second wave of the pandemic broke over Sydney, and they went out again to meet it. One nurse wrote home to her anxious family: 'you could not do anything else only nurse it, when people are crying out for nurses and can't get anyone.'

In June 1919 Eileen wrote: 'The call on nurses just now is very high. It is ten weeks since we went out at all but again we must go out, there is no help for it. I am to be kept at home as long as it can be arranged. I have no fear but only feel sad that I am kept back even a day from doing my duty.'

Good nursing care makes a difference to recovery from illness. OLNPs made a difference to the story of the influenza pandemic in Sydney. The Nurses saved the lives of many elderly poor, and impoverished mothers and children, although for many other sufferers, the Nurses could only offer comfort or companionship as they died.

Eileen fought to keep their focus on nursing only the very poor, despite the new panicked demands of wealthier citizens also terrified by the pandemic. She answered all calls for help, but for those who could afford to pay, Eileen organised outside nurses whom she knew and trusted, in effect running a nursing agency, a practice she would continue in less stressful times.

If they had been united by adversity before, the experience of the flu forged even deeper bonds between the nurses, and between them and their stalwart communities. It also eased some of the tensions between OLNPs and the conservative Archbishop Michael Kelly.

The end of the pandemic saw the return of some form of respectability for OLNPs, and a new respect for their heroic leader, the young woman now seen as Australia's next saint-in-waiting, Eileen O'Connor.

Dr Mary O'Connell a writer and historian, has published a book, Our lady of Coogee on Eileen O'Connor and the founding of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor.

Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor.



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A message from the Archdiocese of Sydney Child sex Abuse is a crime. The appropriate people to deal with a crime are the police. If you – or anyone you know – have been abused, please contact the police. Alternatively, you can contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office at (02) 9390 5810 or safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org.

You may also want to speak to your Parish Priest, who will be able to provide support and guidance. The Archdiocese has a legal obligation to report crimes to the police,

St Brigid's Parish Coogee Safeguarding Officer is Sharon Waller.