

## **Congratulations to Sister Mary O'Neill and Veronica Tierney 2022 DEMPSEY MEDAL AWARDEES**

(This Dempsey medal is an Archdiocesan award for recognising parishioners for long outstanding service to the Parish Community)

**Both of them have been involved in various ministries of Our Lady of Fatima Parish over the years.**



Our thanks go to **Sister Mary** for her long, unselfish, untiring and outstanding service to our Parish.

Since retiring (officially) from Pastoral Care Coordinator position, she continued to be present to many members of the Parish and has been available to them in caring and practical ways.

**Sr Mary O'Neill** was professed as an Ursuline Sister in 1965. After completing a Bachelor of Arts at Australian National University in Canberra, she started teaching at St Ursula's College Kingsgrove in 1969. In 1971, she was transferred to Armidale where she taught and worked in the boarding school at St Ursula's and at the newly formed O'Connor High School (a joint venture of De La Salle and Ursulines). She returned to St Ursula Kingsgrove in 1973 where she taught English, History, assumed many roles including Year 12 Co-ordinator before being appointed Principal in 1989, a role she filled till 2007. During her time, the school was very successful, staffed by a caring group of teachers who worked with Sr Mary in a deeply collaborative fashion.

While she was the Principal, she strengthened the relationship of the school with the Parish.

In 2009, Fr Remy requested her to be the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator of our Parish. In this role, she had worked very closely and supported successive Parish Priests with encouragement and wise advice, as well as helping to carry out the Parish vision. She brought to this role, as to all her life, the spirit of "Serviam" with a caring heart and an empathy and completely selfless attitude. She was also a member of the Parish Council and Carers' Group. She introduced Parish visitations of home bound parishioners, those who are in Nursing Homes and sick in hospitals. She also assisted people in the Parish who were in need, accompanying parishioners to medical appointments, and supplying their needs. Her vision of social justice was deeply ingrained, and she acted this out in her day-to-day activities. She assisted and supported those suffering a bereavement, spending time with them, help these families organise funeral liturgy and all she can to ease their pain.

Sr Mary ran a Lenten Programme each year. She led a group who prepared submissions for the Plenary Council. This group continued even after the submission had been put in, continuing to discuss Theology and Spirituality. Her "care for the earth" was deeply engrained and she copied and distributed articles of interest, including a summary that she did of "Laudato si". She was also involved in creating a history summary booklet for our 70th Anniversary Jubilee.

Sr Mary's commitment to the Ursuline motto of "Serviam", has been lifelong, expressed in caring, compassion and selflessness, many would say Sr Mary embodies the values of **Mother Theresa**.



Thank you also to **Veronica Tierney** for her continued dedicated, outstanding service to the Parish.

**Veronica** was involved in a variety of movements in the post-Vatican II Church. She ran discussion groups from her home following articles published by the Passionist Order in Arcadia on Scripture, Prayer, Spirituality, and Documents of Vatican II. These nightly meetings were also attended by the then Parish Priest, Fr John McSweeney and the Parish Worker, Antoinette Collins. She was instrumental in starting Social Play Group for Mothers and Babies. These groups offered mutual support for new mothers through sharing information and experiences. She was joined in this by Margaret Milne and Peg Denny.

She created the Women's Social Support Group which is still ongoing. This group socialized, attended Theatre Parties, met at club lunches at the Kingsgrove RSL and other venues, excursions to Sydney's places of interest, and shared life and experiences. She organises yearly special wedding anniversary mass for couples who wanted to renew their vows at their 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, etc wedding anniversaries. She was a Church Reader, Acolyte, volunteer for Church cleaning and worked with the Parents and Friends Association of Our Lady of Fatima Primary School giving great support to Sr Gay Williams, Principal, and the whole school community. Veronica joined with other young families – the Fords and the Foxes – to organize Parish Celebrations for Christmas and Easter.

Veronica is a dearly loved, highly respected member of our Parish Community. She has always been active, energetic friendly and outgoing. For Veronica, the family in the Church in the modern world forms a vital unity.

"The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity" (Documents of Vatican II p.257 The church in the modern world.)

**Sr Mary and Veronica will be presented their well-deserved Dempsey Medal award at St. Mary's Cathedral on Sunday, 14 August 2022, at the 10:30 am Mass. ALL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.**