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SISTER NONI MITCHELL IBVM

It is with great sadness that the Loreto Sisters of Australia and South East Asia announce the death of Sr. Noni Mitchell IBVM, former Province Leader and Superior General, on 28 April 2021.

Noni was an extraordinary presence throughout her long life. Born in Belmont NSW, Noni attended the three Loreto Schools of Ballarat, Claremont and Coorparoo before completing her education at Loreto Kirribilli. She went on to study Medicine at the University of Sydney, graduating in 1950. After graduating, she joined the Schools' Medical Service in South Australia working as a doctor for three years before entering the Loreto Novitiate, Ballarat in 1954. After profession, Noni undertook further studies in Theology and completed a degree in Science at the University of Melbourne, followed by studies towards her Diploma in Education.

Noni was first and foremost a leader - in education, religious life and the Church.

As an educator, Noni was Head of Science at Loreto Normanhurst and Kirribilli and Principal of Loreto Kirribilli before she was appointed as Principal of Christ College Melbourne, a newly founded Catholic Teachers' College. Concurrently she was involved in the writing of a new Science textbook and Religious Education texts and served on many significant state and federal education boards and committees. Noni was always alert to developments in education and ready to adopt new practices. Her outstanding contribution to education was recognised in 1997 by an honorary doctorate from the Australian Catholic University and an Order of Australia from the Commonwealth Government.

Noni's enquiring theological mind and her deep spirituality prepared her to be a leader in religious life where the call to reform and renewal was sounding loudly. A woman of Vatican II, Noni brought strong leadership, a breadth of vision, deep wisdom, an inner freedom and a passionate engagement with the issues of the day to her role, first as Provincial of the Australian Province (1974-1983) and then as Superior General (1986-1998) for two terms.

As Superior General, Noni delighted in the increasing internationality of the Institute fostering new ways of living religious life in a time of ferment and change. She also encouraged Sisters to expand their ministerial horizons and respond to the broader needs through 'education and any other means'. Over these years, Sisters were missioned beyond their home provinces to work with refugees in Asia and Africa, to study in the United States and Europe and to join with the then North American branch to explore re-union. She also held many significant meetings with the leadership of our sister Order, the Congregation of Jesus, already envisioning and working towards a union of Mary Ward women.

By any standards Noni had a long and distinguished public life in scholarship, teaching and administration, within the Institute and beyond. Throughout her many years in leadership, she was called on regularly to speak on matters relating to education, changes in religious life in response to Vatican II and the Church's social teachings. An innovative thinker and inspiring speaker, she sowed seeds that continue to bear much fruit.

Noni's love of social gatherings was well known, and her engaging manner and wonderful sense of humour were greatly appreciated. Few will forget Noni's warmth, her winning smile and her gift for friendship.

Noni's motto, *I know in whom I have believed...* (2 Timothy 1:12-14) encapsulates her unwavering faith in the God she so loved which found expression in generous and faith-filled service. A woman of great freedom and integrity, Noni was prepared to blaze new trails in finding creative ways of serving God and the people of God, only because she knew in whom she placed her trust.

We celebrate the life of Sr. Noni Mitchell IBVM, a true Mary Ward woman, and give thanks for her immeasurable contribution to the Province, the global Institute, to the Church and the wider community. Quietly and without fanfare, she has lived out her recent years in her beloved Sydney, amongst the Loreto Sydney community and under the care of James Milson Village, North Sydney where she died peacefully surrounded by the Sisters she so loved.

May she now rest in peace.

Wendy Hildebrand IBVM
Province Leader Australia and South East Asia
29 April 2021



Sister Noni Mitchell IBVM

1928 ~ 2021