

Two remarkable Sisters of Mercy, *Sophie McGrath* and *Marie Anselm Gaudry*, have died in the past week, each having made a significant contribution in their years of ministry, to the place of women in the Australian Church and to the ongoing formation of religious women and men in Australia and beyond.

Sophie McGrath RSM was a theologian and historian, strongly committed to the promotion of women's history as a means of informing and balancing mainstream history in its role of influencing socio-political policies as well as theologies and subsequent spiritualities. In 1998 Sophie was invited to write the contextual history paper to accompany **Woman and Man, One in Christ**, the official report of the Australian Catholic Bishops on Participation of Women in the Australian Catholic Church.

Following the release of the report, and with the support of Rosa McGinley PBVM, (Qld) and Kim Power, a lay woman from Victoria, Sophie worked on a successful submission for the establishment at ACU of a project for Research in Women's History, Theology and Spirituality. The research project which commenced at ACU in 2000, was supported financially by thirty-three Australian religious congregations, including two groups of contemplative women.

In 2003 the Research project was upgraded to Centre status within the ACU Institute for Advanced Research and was named the *Golding Centre* in honour of the three Golding sisters – distinguished Australian Catholic activists of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, who contributed significantly to the social and political life of the wider community.

For the past twenty years at ACU Sophie and her colleagues worked to foster research in the areas of women's history, theology and spirituality through the supervision of masters and doctoral students, the bi-annual distribution of an informative newsletter and the organisation of the highly regarded annual Golding Centre Colloquia.

A Private Requiem will be celebrated for the repose of the soul of Sister Sophie McGrath at the Convent of Mercy, Victoria Road, Parramatta on Thursday 25th June commencing at 10.30am. Burial will follow at the Catholic Cemetery North Rocks. Livestreaming of the service can be accessed at: <http://www.FuneralVideo.com.au/SrSophieMcGrath>

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Sister Marie Anselm Gaudry RSM founded the *New Life Program* at Marymount, Castle Hill NSW in 1984. Over the ensuing thirty-seven years Marie's initial vision has borne fruit in the lives of countless religious and clergy from Australia, the Asia-Pacific and countries around the world who have participated in the *New Life* programs.

These programs were designed to contribute to the ongoing renewal and professional development of the participants, many of whom came after long years in the mission fields seeking a time of sabbatical and updating before returning to new assignments. Programs for Formators and for those preparing for perpetual profession were also offered.

For many, a *New Life* program proved to be a time for deep personal healing of life's hurts and memories, a time of grace and enormous growth. Participants and staff alike benefited from the rich variety of cultural backgrounds and ecclesial experiences of participants.

Prior to commencing the *New Life Programs* at Marymount Castle Hill, Marie served two terms as Congregation Leader for the Sisters of Mercy Parramatta (1974-1980 and 1992-1998). She was also for a time, Associate Vicar for Religious in the Diocese of Parramatta. Funeral arrangements for *Sister Marie Gaudry RSM* will be published in the SMH.

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