

WELCOME

On behalf of the Community a very warm welcome to everyone to this very special – unique – celebration of a life well lived – much of it here in this place and especially in this chapel which was the heartbeat of Francis's life for many long years – even beyond the long years when she was physically present here.

This chapel was where Francis first came as a child to learn – to live – to love; it is where her faith matured; expanded and grew to be inclusive and influential over the generations of pupils; staff; parents for whom her faith, energy and love were beacons.

This is the place where her musicality found its voice in her beautiful singing of the psalms day after day.

That heartbeat of prayer and love, grown and nurtured here never left her, but rather sustained her over the decades after she moved away. Moved away but never left – her life was still lived through the rhythm of prayer and service, still as a canoness in the very core of her being.

We have put together a liturgy for today that speaks of her life in its entirety; with pieces chosen which were special to her and which she used to inspire and encourage others.

We went back to the liturgy she devised herself for her Silver Jubilee celebration to find texts which spoke of her deepest desires and faith.

The booklet which you will receive at the end of the service is a testimony to her giftedness as both teacher and headteacher.

It is steeped in love and faith. Lived in love and faith – a resurrection faith which is at the heart of this Community and was at the heart of the school that she fashioned.

A faith which lives through the struggles and darkness with the eye and heart of hope.

Francis knew those struggles all too well in her own life but her faith never wavered.

At the offertory Mary Stephen will bring one of her own paintings to the table – a painting which we want to gift to Francis's family. It is entitled: Light flares out

It speaks of the light of Francis's faith; a faith that didn't shimmer or burn – but it flared – flared through the darkness – fired by the hope that her faith brought her.

And so today in many ways completes the circle and we are grateful that Fr Leslie is here to say mass with us, as he did so often when Francis, his friend, was here 40 years ago.

We pray that it will be a time of celebration, healing and peace for us all.

September 2021

S. Moira O'Sullivan CRSS