

CANOSSIAN DAUGHTERS of CHARITY - FDCC

THE CANOSSIAN DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY - FDCC STORY

We are a multicultural group of women spread across five continents seeking to be the drop in the ocean that creates ripples of change. We strive to bring justice and charity to a complex and needy world. The spirit given to our Foundress, St. Magdalen of Canossa, is the proverbial mustard seed that continues to grow through the lives of those who today bear the name (Canossian) Daughters of Charity. As we draw near to the celebration of our bi-centenary, it can be said that the spirit of Magdalen challenges us to continually look for new and relevant ways of spreading the gentle spirit of the redemptive love of Jesus on the Cross in uncertain and turbulent times.

Magdalen, foundress and saint, was born to the noble Canossa family in Verona, Italy in 1774. Her father died when she was five and her mother remarried when Magdalen was aged 7. Deep suffering at this vulnerable age sensitised Magdalen to the suffering of others, especially the poor.

In 1808, after years of struggle with family responsibilities, Magdalen left the family palace for the last time, free to bring the love and hope of Jesus to the marginalised and outcast. With a specific focus on the needs of the “street kids” living in the rubble of her own war-torn city, Magdalen’s heart reached out to them, and to all who were materially or spiritually poor. Her main aim was to awaken in the poor an awareness of their dignity as sons and daughters of God. To restore their dignity and give them hope. Magdalen’s efforts, touched the lives of others, both the wealthy and poor, inspiring them to “do their bit” and make their own contribution to alleviate poverty, and to build a more just and humane society. Magdalen saw the critical needs of her time and responded with the gift of her own life. One of the early pioneers in the promotion of the laity, Magdalen trained young women in both practical and pastoral skills to be shared and promoted in turn in their own parishes. Through outreach programs, education, faith formation and assistance to the sick, Magdalen offered the poor the skills, tools and knowledge to break free of the cycle of deprivation and despair. In the words of Pope John Paul II during the canonisation of Magdalen (2.10.88): St. Magdalen of Canossa yearned to promote the dignity of every woman in social life; she dedicated herself to the religious and human formation of youth; she intelligently devised ways for a rebirth of religious assistance in families through catechesis.

Since 1949, the Institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity is an integral part of Australian society. In reaching out to the local poverties within changing social, cultural and economic realities, we also keep in view the needs of our struggling missions: Sudan, East Timor, and Paraguay - just to name a few. “Oh, if only we could go to the ends of the world where the name of Jesus is not known. Jesus’ love

for all people...gave me a great longing to make Him known and loved, even to the ends of the earth.” (Magdalen)



*Sr. Trish Surawski with
Sudanese refugees*

MISSION AND MINISTRY

Magdalen’s greatest challenge to us is to do whatever we do with love. But not just any kind of love! The kind of love that Jesus himself offered to us as his last gift on the cross. This means that wherever we are and whatever we do, we are called not only to make a difference through our work, but also through our lives as we try to spread the message of the gospel.

The changing nature of our world and of our society continually provokes us to review, reshape and re-commit ourselves to be at the service of current needs in the spirit of Magdalen whose special concern was her “beloved poor.” Through a variety of ministries we are committed to the promotion of human dignity and self-esteem.

The vision of Magdalen was a just and equitable society where all could share equally in the fruits of the earth, and where all would come to see their self worth, not in what they have, but in being loved by God as son or daughter. Her desire to make Jesus known and loved prompted Magdalen to do many things, not least to give free education, particularly to teenagers, while also providing for their material needs. Magdalen’s aim was to prepare them for life as she accompanied them in their faith.

Magdalen’s vision of the five branches of “charity” as guiding principles for our choices in ministry, remain the backbone of our discernment for contemporary critical needs.

- a. Education
- b. Evangelisation
- c. Care of the sick
- d. The spiritual exercises
- e. Promotion of the laity

Within the framework of these fields, we are open to contemporary and cultural expressions of poverty where the need is greater.

FORMATION

What is it? And when and where does it begin? Some people call it a “spiritual journey” and maybe that’s a good way to put it. It often begins with “How do I know if I am being called (to religious life)? And then how do I know where I am being called?” These kinds of questions are often the beginning of personal accompaniment offered by some of our Sisters which aims at helping enquirers to explore and/or deepen your direction in life. The time span is paced by individual needs with no pressure to make decisions at any point in time.

If someone asks “What’s next”, they would be invited to spend some time with one of our communities, obligation free, to have a closer look at Religious life as it is lived by the Canossian Daughters of Charity. During this period life goes on as normal for any enquirer, and personal accompaniment continues. The span of this “Come-and-see” period varies from person to person, lasting up to six months.

A decision to start a more serious journey in the spirit of Magdalen, would mean that it is no longer an observation period but an initial commitment to try the lifestyle in small steps. During this phase the candidate continues normal activities while becoming more involved in community life. This phase can last from six months to two years, according to the needs of the individual.

The final phase, novitiate, is a two-year period with specific structures designed to help you to become more familiar with, and immersed in a deeper personal spiritual journey. The program aims to provide opportunities for the integration of human and spiritual reflection and experience as one commits herself more fully to the Canossian way of life.

The taking of First Vows at the end of the novitiate period is the beginning of Religious life as a Canossian Daughter of Charity. During this period, although living as a fully committed member of the Institute, the newly professed Sister would still be provided with regular opportunities for personal accompaniment and support.

OUR VISION

Our life and charism call us to full-time commitment to strive to live and love as Jesus did:

1. to act justly and strive to live a simple but joyous life
2. to love tenderly as Jesus did and taught
3. to walk humbly with God as Daughters and servants in God's kingdom

Wherever we are and whatever we do, we are called to, not only make a difference, but through our lives spread the message of the Love of the gospel: to offer the Love

of Jesus crucified to all those we minister to, bringing them the life-giving Hope that leads to the resurrection.

VOCATION INFORMATION

Vocations Co-ordinator
Canossian Daughters of Charity
1197 Stanley St. East,
COORPAROO. QLD. 4151

Phone: 07 33983555 / 0419779262

E-mail: covifdcc@canossa.org.au

Canossian International Website: <http://www.fdcc.org/in/canossiane/canossians.htm>