

Sr. Maria O'Sullivan



Growing up in rural Ireland in the 1930s, I was nurtured from childhood by the beauty of its landscape and especially by the give-and-take, the love, laughter and tears environment of a large family.

Looking back on my Catholic upbringing in my home, at school and socially, faith, while never discussed, simply permeated all that was.

I think that my grandmother in particular had a big influence on me. Her obvious experience of the soul-world and her familiarity with The Sacred Heart, Our Lady and St. Anthony made them seem like invisible household friends. And so often her kindly, gentle heart sheltered us children when disciplinary measures threatened!

Praise the Lord with timbrel and dance

For as long as I can remember the thought of dedicating my life to God was somewhere in my soul. The Sisters in my school at St. Paul's Convent, Kilfinane in Co. Limerick impressed me greatly, and were a wonderful example to us as pupils.



However, while the phrase “vocation discernment” was nowhere in my vocabulary, my heart was nurturing its own dream.

My teenage years were a great mixture of study, friends and fun. And full of make-believe possibilities that were seemingly inexhaustible! Mine was the era of the Ballrooms of Romance and possibly from there lingers a memory that makes me look forward to the Eternal Banquet!

After finishing school I finally made the decision that led me to Selly Park Convent, Birmingham. Only to be followed on arrival by the reality of the loneliness and desolation of that huge decision to leave family, friends and country for the Lord. Even now fifty-seven years later, my memory still holds the awful, awful pain of those first days and months when all I really wanted, discernment or not, was a return ticket home!

Sing to the Lord a new song

Looking back now over the long years in education and other ministries, and in diverse circumstances in Ireland, England and South Africa, I feel so grateful to God whose goodness has followed me throughout, and whose generosity knows only the hundredfold.



I also know that a life long commitment to the Lord has to be nurtured every step of the way in the school of discipleship. Nurtured by a deep intimacy with the Lord in prayer, and with a passion for His Kingdom. This school of discipleship is one of love, joy and endless self-sacrifice. While the Lord does not take away the stress and pain of life, He does fit the back for the burden and helps the soul to sing again.

The passionate heart is ever creative and always there is a new song.

A sweeter song more finely tuned to the music of things eternal.

