

WOMEN FOR OUR LIVES OF FAITH

The woman in this weekend's Gospel Reading has much to teach us about faith and prayer, and our openness to others who are different from us. Jesus applauds her faith! So many women of faith give shape to our lives. Some of the more publicly known in the story of our Church are:

Esther, who pleaded against 'the powers' for the liberation of her people

Judith, who routed the plans of men and saved the community

Deborah, laywoman and judge, who led the people of God

Elizabeth of Judaea, who recognised and rejoiced in the life of another woman

Mary Magdalen, minister for Jesus, first evangelist of the Risen Christ

Scholastica, who taught her brother Benedict to honour the spirit above the system

Joan of Arc, who put no law above the law of God

Clare of Assisi, who confronted the Pope with the image of woman as equal

Julian of Norwich, who proclaimed the motherhood of God

Catherine of Siena, to whom the Pope listened

Teresa of Avila, who brought women's gifts to the reform of the Church

Edith Stein, who brought fearlessness to faith

Elizabeth Seaton, who broke down boundaries between lay women and religious by wedding motherhood and religious life

Dorothy Day, who led the Church to a new sense of justice

Mary, mother of Jesus, who heard the call of God and answered; who drew strength from the woman Elizabeth; who persisted in hardship bearing Christ; who ministered at Cana; who was inspired at Pentecost; who turned the Spirit of God into the body and blood of Christ.

*The list above is from Sr Joan Chittester, A litany of women for the Church [U.S.]
To that we can readily add these 'Aussies':*

Mary MacKillop, who showed out the presence of Christ in Australian cities and towns and the bush to those in need

Mary Glowrey, Melbourne woman who lived faith in action through prayer, learning, medicine, work for the poor and needy, serving woman and children in India.

Eileen O'Connor, who co-founded Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor in Sydney with the aim of creating a community of nurses to help the sick in the homes of the poor who could not pay.

Caroline Chisholm, who worked to provide safety and security to immigrants, especially women and families, in 1800s Sydney; and developed shelters for families travelling to the Victorian goldfields (one was situated at the far end of Keilor Village – see the sign in the park).

Given this brief list, it is no wonder that presentations to the preparation phase of the Plenary Council are urging our Church to recognise and implement an equal place for women in all elements of our Church – for we are a community of faith, faith in action for the gospel of Jesus, together, aren't we?