

GOODBYE TO SR BARBARA

An era has come to a close as Sr Barbara May csb has officially retired from St Augustine's Parish Maryborough due to health reasons.

Being involved in many community events and charities, Sr Barbara first came to town in 1993 as a teacher, but quickly found herself working as a pastoral worker in the St Augustine Parish. The well-known identity was a tireless worker for the parish, organising children to receive the Sacraments including baptisms, as well as arranging weddings and funerals.

Sr Barbara's work wasn't just limited to the church as she was also involved in the community, having served as patron for Relay for Life as well as being a member of Maryborough Probus Club, Maryborough Cemetery Trust, St Vincent de Paul, The Coffee Group, as well as many others, which led her to be awarded Central Goldfields Shire Citizen of the Year in 2014. At the time Sr Barbara said, "I was really delighted to get it," she says of the Australia Day award. "I was very humbled. I didn't expect to come up on the stage because I knew there had been other people who had been nominated." With her involvement in a number of groups in Maryborough and surrounds, Sr Barbara said the award was also for them. "That's part of the award, for all the different groups I have worked in."



Sr Barbara's bright outgoing personality, together with her variety of interests allowed her to work successfully with people of all ages and with individuals, families and groups. She is both a good listener and communicator and was always there to help. As a selfless person, she was very generous with her time and always put other people's needs before her own. Sr Barbara's interests took her to various communities in the shire outside Maryborough — Dunolly, Bealiba, Carisbrook and Talbot — and to surrounding communities in Avoca, Tarnagulla, Moonambel, Redbank and Amphitheatre.

Her astute understanding of people's needs helped her to relate well to others in a wide variety of situations, while her local knowledge assisted her to source support for those in need.

In her time with the parish, Sr Barbara who is now receiving care in the Brigidine Community in Malvern, lent support to many priests over the years. When the priests were unavailable, Sr Barbara would always take over their duties with capability and enthusiasm along with her unique sense of humour.

In the past, she has been a great support to families in times of personal tragedy, to members of the church as well as the community. Her strong sense of social justice saw her championing those most vulnerable in the wider community.

On Saturday, July 26, the St Augustine's parish and the wider community farewelled Sr Barbara with a Thanksgiving Mass, which was followed by a well-attended feast.

Article courtesy of the Maryborough District Advertiser



Homily from Fr John Monaghan, Parish Priest on the occasion can be read below:

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C 24th July 2016
Parish Farewell to Sr Barbara May CSB

One of the surprising things about Sr Barbara is that she isn't the size of a sumo wrestler. In our recent clergy In-Service, Jewish scholar Amy-Jill Levine, who knows our Christian Scriptures inside out, says she imagines Jesus to have been a rather chubby person.

The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus dining with people, friend and foe alike. When not enough food to go around, Jesus multiplied loaves and fishes or asked his disciples to cast their fishing nets on the other side for an abundant catch. (Almost everywhere Jesus went, people and meals went hand in hand with his presence.)



If we added up all the meals, morning and afternoon teas and everything else Sr Barbara shared with others so regularly, she should look like the side of a house or at least be like an ever-smiling female Buddha in our midst! For Barbara, Australia's biggest morning tea isn't once a year but happens every day in cafes, bars, people's homes and parish office.

Accompanied by her wonderful capacity of meeting people where we are – a thousand and one different geographical locations also metaphorically representing her marvellous ability to empathise and communicate with people from all walks of life in a myriad of situations. Along with her religious vows, we could be forgiven for thinking she was also polygamous – given the great number of people she cared for and supported “in good times and bad, in sickness and health.”



It's been hard to find out exactly how long Barbara's been in our parish because it's difficult finding people whose memories go back to before she arrived. Sometime, I've been told, early in Fr Dan Arundell's time as parish priest in a previous millennium so what we can say is it's been a mighty long time! This AFL season is a quite remarkable one for the number of players having milestone matches of two or

three hundred games and breaking club records. Next weekend it'll be Boomer Harvey breaking Michael Tuck's all-time record. With Barbara we've had the immense benefit and equivalent of a fully committed 500 gamer in our midst.

Sr Barbara's departure means also farewelling the Brigidine sisters from our parish. Since their arrival in 1902, we've been blessed by their diligent work and wonderful presence – as teachers, pastoral associates and overall exemplary disciples of Jesus in our community. St Augustine's school and Highview College are deeply indebted to the Brigidines as well as our parish overall. One of their great charisms: “there's merit in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well” has certainly been an enduring feature of their ministry throughout our parish and elsewhere (that I know personally from my sisters' education at Marian College, Ararat).

Their humility is exhibited in the annual Feast Day of St Brigid being on the Irish Calendar of Saints but not our Aussie Saints calendar. It's date, February 1st, is nicely aligned with the beginning of the school year as we seek God's blessing for our students. Perhaps we could down the track celebrate instead the Feast of St Barbara – the 21st of July being an appropriate date for this with it also being her birthday!

We've listened to the story of Jesus teaching us to pray. Throughout her time with us, Barbara has been an immensely dynamic and vital part of our praying community. “Ask and it will be given, search and you will find, knock and the door will open.” I'm not sure if we'll easily, or at all, find another Barbara. Then again we probably didn't know exactly what kind of package we were getting when she arrived.

With her we place our faith and trust in the One who knows our needs well before we do and who, having answered our prayers before, will continue to do so and just as surely grant us more than we ask for.

On this day we thank and farewell Sr Barbara, we're ever more grateful to God for the blessings we've received in abundance throughout her time and ministry among us. May God bless you and keep you and may you be held forever in the palm of God's hand.