

Hearts for Mission

This year our Mercy Moments will be focusing on mission. Some of the greatest examples of practical and untiring work for God's mission can be found in the lives of our founders. Nano Nagle, founder the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose anniversary we celebrate on 26th April, is a shining example of mission fidelity and leadership.

Nano Nagle was a pioneer of Catholic education in Ireland, a supporter and advocate for women and girls, the elderly, the imprisoned and those living in squalor and deprivation. Her final words to the small group of sisters at her deathbed were "Love one another as you have hitherto done. Spend yourselves for the poor." Nano worked tirelessly for God's mission – her lantern a symbol of the light she brought to the lives of thousands of people whose lives were blighted by violence, cruel laws and deliberate exclusion from social and economic progress.

Indeed, Nano's compassionate and loving heart led her to respond to the call of God in very practical ways. In a time when it was illegal to teach the Catholic faith or to educate Catholics, Nano opened schools for the poor children. Despite the dangers and the dire consequences if she was caught, Nano brought the light of education, employment and hope to generations of Cork's poorest people.

Most evenings Nano could be found trudging along the narrow laneways carrying a lantern in one hand, a basket of food and supplies in the other. Nano noticed those made poor: she was attentive to their need for education, faith, health, and wellbeing. Nano's lantern was a beacon of connection, a sign that someone cared enough to visit, that someone was prepared to reach out in love.

Although Nano Nagle's own work was confined to her native city of Cork, her understanding of mission was universal. The poor, marginalized, and vulnerable people hold a special place in

the heart of God and in the heart of Nano. What Nano began in Cork over 267 years ago is alive and well today in 24 countries: Antigua, Australia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Slovakia, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Nano's global legacy of social action and advocacy continues to be lived out in some of the poorest places in our world. The lantern shines in the fight for social and climate justice, peacemaking, advocacy for refugees and care for those who are voiceless. Today the Presentation Sisters, continue to carry the lantern for God's mission, living it every day, walking boldly in the footsteps of Nano Nagle.

A Lantern Prayer

God of Eternal Light, inspire us to be your lanterns in our world.

Lanterns of hope when darkness swirls around.
Lanterns of compassion for those who struggle.

Lanterns of justice for times of challenge
Lanterns of love for all of those you send us for special care.

Amen

May we take inspiration from Nano and be true resurrection people, lighting lanterns of love and compassion in our world.



Artwork © Eleanor Yates

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

REFLECTION

How can we light lanterns that bring hope to those we serve in our ministries?