

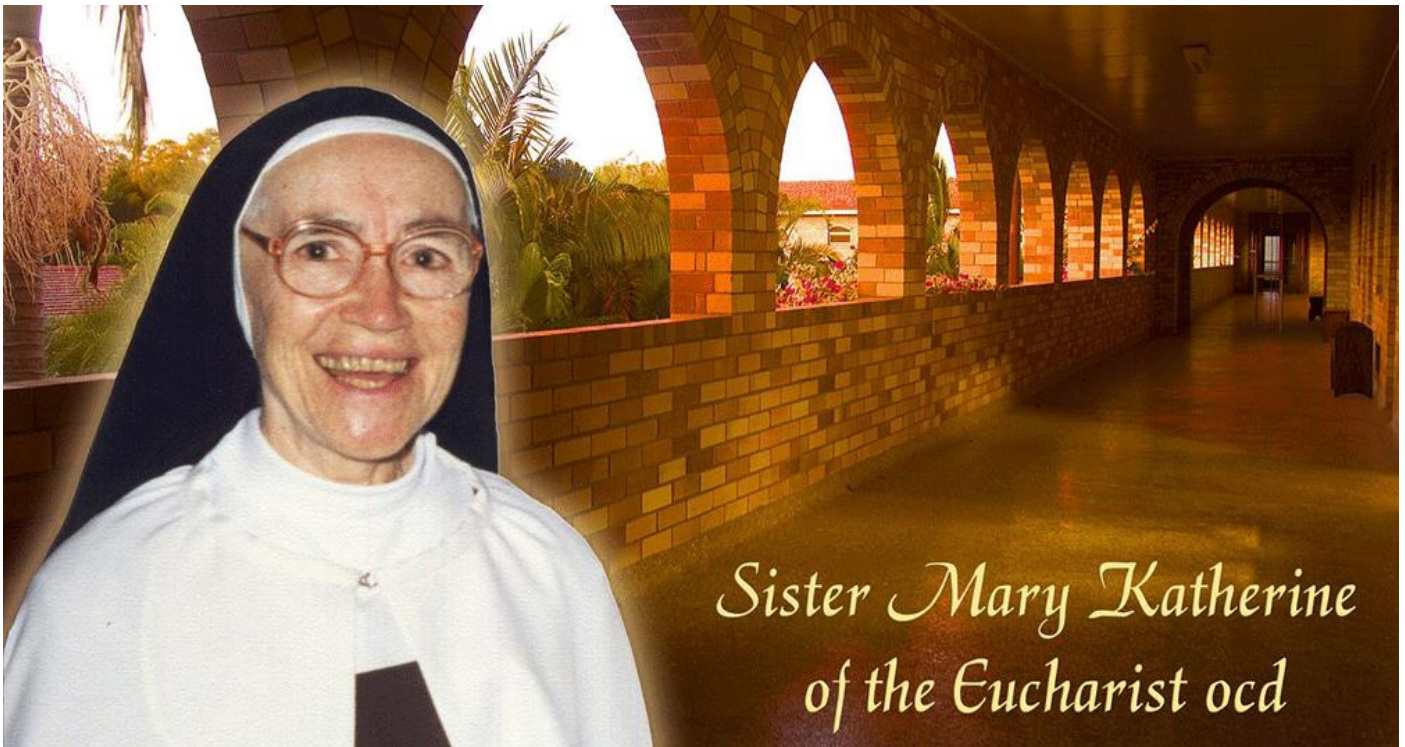


# Carmelite Newsletter

Australia, New Zealand & Oceania

23 June 2025

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ



Sister Mary Katherine  
of the Eucharist ocd

At her funeral Mass on 31 January 2025 at the Carmelite Monastery at Ormiston, Sister Katherine Therese Mezger, OCD was remembered by Sister Colette Fahey, OCD, prioress of the Ormiston Carmel, Queensland, as a woman of deep faith and unwavering commitment to her vocation. This is an edited version, the funeral eulogy, which first appeared in Brisbane's *Catholic Leader* of 8 February 2025. Sr Katherine's 70 years as a Discalced Carmelite nun were marked by devotion, faith, resilience and leadership.

Sr. Katherine started school at the age of four alongside her older sister, Mary. Her primary schooling was with the Sisters of Mercy, and from an early age, she learned piano and violin with the Sisters of St Joseph. At the age of five, she made her First Holy Communion with four others. One of them, Ged Brennan, later (Sir Gerard Brennan) became a significant figure in her young adult life and much later, the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.

The outbreak of war with Japan disrupted her junior education, as war regulations prevented children from attending school regularly. During this time, her sister Hazel attended night classes at Commercial College and for safety, during the nightly blackouts, Katherine accompanied her. Both learned typing and shorthand there. For her senior schooling, Katherine attended Lourdes Hill College boarding school in Brisbane.



Since a three-day retreat in primary school, Katherine had felt God calling her to be a nun. In her final year of school, a Holy Spirit missionary sister spoke to the entire student body about the missionary vocation. She felt this was for her and wrote to her parents, expressing her hope to join the sisters after leaving school. Her parents arranged for her to meet with the bishop during the holidays. The bishop, himself a missionary, recommended that she attend university first.



Katherine graduated with an Arts and Music degree in 1948 and became president of Duchesne College, run by the Sacred Heart sisters at the University of Queensland.

Her leadership qualities developed in student politics and welfare, with encouragement from Ged Brennan, president of the National Union of University Students. He suggested she move to Melbourne University as secretary of the Union.



After a year, Jed proposed that Katherine attend the World Conference of the International Union of Students in Prague as one of three Australian delegates. In Prague, struck by the zeal of students for communist ideology, she questioned whether she had the same zeal for her Christian faith. After the conference, she travelled in Europe with friends, finishing in Rome at Christmas 1950, where she attended events marking the close of the Holy Year. Back in London, she learned from her flatmate that a woman had recently joined the Carmel in Adelaide. Then, Katherine was asked to give a talk on St. Thérèse, which led her to reread the saint's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*. The pieces of the jigsaw fell into place, and she set her sights on Carmel.

Katherine's young life had given her a strong education, experience living in community as a boarder at school and in residential college, leadership skills and the opportunity to work and travel. She had matured, developing her capacity for friendship, her ability to listen to advice, take initiative and to make the most of opportunities. Her vocation gradually became clear. Back home in Rockhampton, she worked as a music mistress at Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School, taking two years to save up for the dowry she believed was required to enter Carmel.

During the Christmas holidays, she visited multiple times the Brisbane Carmel, then located in Auchenflower and was accepted for entry. Her entrance date was set for Sunday, 27 June, 1954.

She saw the date as providential: June 27 is the Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to whom her mother had prayed unceasingly for her children through all their ups and downs. Katherine believed she owed her vocation, under God, to her mother's prayers. At the time, it was customary to visit the bishop of the archdiocese and ask for his blessing before entering. Archbishop Duhig told Katherine she was making the biggest mistake of her life and refused to give her his blessing. Undeterred, she left without his blessing, determined to follow what she believed was God's call, with the same determination so loved by St Thérèse.

Sr Katherine served several terms as prioress of Carmel in Ormiston over 30 years. Following the Second Vatican Council, when the Church called for a renewal of religious life, Sr Katherine guided the community with great wisdom. Her leadership style was collaborative; she never imposed decisions but waited for the majority to be on board, sometimes agonising over choices. She recognised the different gifts and talents of the sisters and encouraged their use for the good of all.

At this time, her musical talents also came to the fore as she led the community in introducing melodies for the Liturgy of the Hours. In 1996, Sister Katherine was elected the foundation president of the Association of Carmels in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania. In community life, she was an all-rounder. Her vegetable garden projects won prizes at the local Redlands show. She enthusiastically participated in community entertainments, such as plays. Her rendition of Pope Benedict, complete with his love of cats, is now part of community folklore.



### Final years and legacy

Sr Katherine suffered a serious illness. During this time, she was heard to say, "Whatever He wants." Despite the effects of treatment, she carried on with characteristic determination to serve God and her community. One evening, Sister Katherine fell in the cloister, sustaining a fractured hip. As the sisters rushed to her aid, they noticed that above this dramatic scene hung a depiction of Christ being stripped of His garments. This moment was prophetic: it spoke of the suffering to come but also of the hope that the One who called her all those years ago would never abandon her.

In her final years, Sister Katherine endured her own stripping away through an illness that left her unable to speak and barely able to move. She patiently accepted all, giving her all to the very end, always with her characteristic "Whatever He wants" and her ever-animated smile. Her priest friends have described her as a pillar of the community, a cornerstone and a hidden treasure of the archdiocese.

Sr Katherine's life personified the Carmelite motto: *With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts.*



## A Personal Tribute from the Editor

I knew Sr. Katherine of the Eucharist and of St Joseph for over 50 years. We first 'met' sometime in the early 1970s, possibly in 1971 or 1972. In a small prayer book, I saw a banner of Our Lady of Perpetual Help that the Ormiston nuns had made. I was a high school student at that time and my reception into the Church was delayed by parental opposition until I was 18, so I was unable to receive Holy Communion. I wrote to the Prioress of the Ormiston Carmel to see whether one of the nuns would receive Holy Communion for me. Sr. Katherine stepped forward, possibly because she was 'of the Eucharist'. Her letter spoke of the unique love that God has for each soul, loving each soul as if it were the only soul. She included instructions so I could unite with her in prayer at the time she received Holy Communion. Truly the Eucharist deepens union with Christ and calls us into communion with one another. The Eucharistic Jesus is our window on eternity but also the way to heaven. As the soon to be canonised Carlo Acutis put it: *L'Eucaristia: La mia autostrada per il cielo (The Eucharist: my freeway to Heaven)*. My connection with Sr. Katherine has always been through this sublime mystery only passing away when we meet God 'face to face' and enjoy communion with each other in heaven. We had the custom in recent years of sending greetings on the feast of Our Lady of the Eucharist/Blessed Sacrament: 13 May, which is also the feast of Our Lady of Fatima.



We met in person for the first time in 1978 when I visited Ormiston. It was through the heavy curtain and grille but strangely it seemed to make communication easier. She promised to keep praying for me, which she did for over 50 years. Almost immediately after she died, I began referring to her as Mother Katherine, though she always insisting on being called Sr. Katherine. Truly she was a spiritual mother to me and I am so very grateful for such a long association with her. At that meeting, she passed me through the two way drawer a copy of the Allison Peers' translation St Teresa's *Interior Castle*, which I put aside. I picked it up and read it early the following year. It was the best thing that I'd ever read and was the next step of my Carmelite journey. Re-reading it years later, I wonder how I had understood any of it.



A momentous occasion for our Sisters

Hers was truly a life of prayer that was not contained by the restrictions of enclosure but made more fruitful by it. Mother Katherine had many, many people that she prayed for and whom she met through being prioress. At her funeral, Fr Frank Brennan, SJ, the son of Sir Gerard Brennan, said what a strong spiritual support she had been for his father. I remember her telling me the story of the visit of St John Paul II to Brisbane. The nuns at the Carmel went to the Papal Mass in Brisbane in 1986. This outing is included in the video produced for the Ormiston Carmel's Golden Jubilee and is available on [YouTube](#). At some time during the celebration, at the end from memory, she came face to face with the Holy Father, who took her arm and said: *Pray, sister, pray*. She called it the grace of a lifetime.

In the last 20 years our communications became easier and more frequent because Mother Katherine was the websister and we corresponded regularly by email. She encouraged me and I sent her my theology essays to read, which she seemed to appreciate. She was a great spiritual support until infirmity meant that she could no longer email or write. I continued to receive cards and messages from her faithful secretary, Sr John of the Cross, who is seated to the right of Mother Katherine in the photo above from the Papal Mass. It was very hard when I no longer received her correspondence, even though the support of her prayers continued. Eventually I became Discalced Secular Carmelite and to acknowledge our friendship and Mother Katherine's support, I professed my promises under the name: "of the Eucharistic Face of Jesus and of St Joseph", as allowed by our OCDS Constitutions and National Statutes.





## Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ – Homily of our Holy Father, Leo XVI

Dear brothers and sisters, it is wonderful to be in the presence of Jesus. The Gospel passage we just heard attests to this; it recounts how the crowds spent long hours listening to him speak about the Kingdom of God and seeing him heal the sick (cf. Lk 9:11). Jesus' compassion for the suffering shows us the loving closeness of God, who comes into our world to save us. Where God reigns, we are set free from all evil. Yet even for those who accept the good news brought by Jesus, the hour of trial comes. In that deserted place, where the crowds were listening to the Master, evening fell and there was nothing to eat (cf. v. 12). The hunger of the people and the setting of the sun speak to us of a limit that looms over the world and every creature: the day ends, as does the life of every human being. At that hour of need and of gathering shadows, Jesus remains present in our midst.

Precisely when the day is ending and hunger sets in, as the Apostles themselves ask him to dismiss the crowds, Christ surprises us with his mercy. He feels compassion for those who are hungry and he invites his disciples to provide for them. Hunger is not foreign to the preaching of the Kingdom and the message of salvation. On the contrary, it speaks to us of our relationship with God. At the same time, five loaves and two fish seem completely inadequate to feed the people. The disciples' calculations, apparently so reasonable, reveal their lack of faith. For where the Lord is present, we find all that we need to give strength and meaning to our lives.



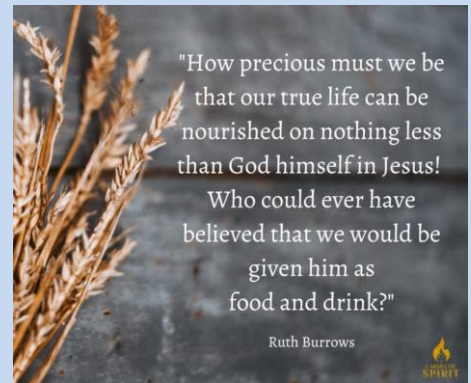
Jesus responds to the appeal of hunger with the sign of sharing: he *raises his eyes, recites the blessing, breaks the bread, and feeds all present* (cf. v. 16). The Lord's actions are not some complicated magical rite; they simply show his gratitude to the Father, his filial prayer and the fraternal communion sustained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fish by sharing what is available. As a result, there is enough for everyone. In fact, more than enough. After all had eaten their fill, twelve baskets-full were gathered up (cf. v. 17).

That is how Jesus satisfies the hunger of the crowd: he does what God does, and he teaches us to do the same. Today, in place of the crowds mentioned in the Gospel, entire peoples are suffering more as a result of the greed of others than from their own hunger. In stark contrast to the dire poverty of many, the amassing of wealth by a few is the sign of an arrogant indifference that produces pain and injustice. Rather than sharing, it

squanders the fruits of the earth and human labour. Especially in this Jubilee Year, the Lord's example is a yardstick that should guide our actions and our service: we are called to share our bread, to multiply hope and to proclaim the coming of God's Kingdom.

In saving the crowds from hunger, Jesus proclaims that he will save everyone from death. That is the mystery of faith, which we celebrate in the sacrament of the Eucharist. For just as hunger is a sign of our radical needs in this life, so breaking bread is a sign of God's gift of salvation.

Dear friends, Christ is God's answer to our human hunger, because his Body is the bread of eternal life: Take this and eat of it, all of you! Jesus' invitation reflects our daily experience: in order to remain alive, we need to nourish ourselves with life, drawing it from plants and animals. Yet eating something dead reminds us that we too, no matter how much we eat, will one day die. On the other hand, when we partake of Jesus, the living and true Bread, we live for him. By offering himself completely, the crucified and risen Lord delivers himself into our hands, and we realize that we were made to partake of God. Our hungry nature bears the mark of a need that is satisfied by the grace of the Eucharist. As Saint Augustine writes, Christ is truly "*panis qui reficit, et non deficit; panis qui sumi potest, consumi non potest*" (Sermon 130, 2): he is bread that restores and does not run short; bread that can be eaten but not exhausted. The Eucharist, in fact, is the true, real, and substantial presence of the Saviour (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1413), who transforms bread into himself in order to transform us into himself. Living and life-giving, the *Corpus Domini* makes us, the Church herself, the Body of the Lord.



For this reason, echoing the Apostle Paul (cf. 1 Cor 10:17), the Second Vatican Council teaches that "in the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both expressed and achieved. All are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we come, through whom we live, and towards whom we direct our lives" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 3). The procession that we are about to undertake is a sign of that journey. Together, as shepherds and flock, we will feed on the Blessed Sacrament, adore him and carry him through the streets. In doing so, we will present him before the eyes, the consciences and the hearts of the people. To the hearts of those who believe, so that they may believe more firmly; to the hearts of those who do not believe, so that they may reflect on the hunger present within them and the bread that alone can satisfy it.

Strengthened by the food that God gives us, let us bring Jesus to the hearts of all, because Jesus involves everyone in his work of salvation by calling each of us to sit at his table. Blessed are those who are called, for they become witnesses of this love!

*He fed them with the finest wheat and satisfied them with honey from the rock. Ps 80:17*