

Australian Pilgrimage: Sydney and Parramatta



Portrait of Mary Aikenhead as Superior General: Deb Pettigrew 2011

"May we all make our journeys and changes so as to render them so many steps towards the right road for the Eternal Kingdom."

Mary Aikenhead

Preamble

This pilgrimage is intended to provide the pilgrim with an opportunity to come to a closer understanding of the story of the earliest years of the foundation of the Sisters of Charity in Australia. It aims to assist the pilgrim to:

- connect with the five women who made that first journey, took those first steps on this soil and commenced those works of charity which would grow into our ministries today, and;
- encourage the pilgrim to consider how their heart and mind is responding to the call to continue these great works in new and contemporary contexts.

The pilgrimage draws its spirituality from the faith and vision of Mary Aikenhead herself, and considers how the lived experience of this group of five women of varying ages, background and personality transplanted and nurtured this original spirituality for a new foundation, listening for where they might be called and seeking where they would be 'extensively useful'.

It recognises that which Mary Aikenhead always knew, that the very humanity of each Sister could be her greatest strength or her keenest challenge, but that ultimately they had but the divine providence of the Lord to guide and support their work.

And it calls on each pilgrim who traces these footsteps to recognise their unique humanity, to understand their individual journey of faith, and to discern their place in this continuing story, to honour those who have walked before them, and to walk the path that they will create for those who will follow them.

Leadership Formation Framework: Formation of the Heart

The Australian Pilgrimage embodies the principles and practices which are to be found in the Leadership Formation Framework: Formation of the Heart, published by the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries in 2011 which provides guidance and support for those who undertake the planning development and implementation of formation activities within Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

In particular this pilgrimage recognises that:

- Formation programs develop participants' understanding of their place within the broader ministry of the Church;
- Quality formation shapes and transforms the individual, the ministerial culture and society;
- Reflective and integrative processes are essential for quality ministry formation.

The Australian Pilgrimage experience aims to:

- build awareness of the foundation story through a focus on 'people in place'
- develop an understanding of the humanity and personality of the five founding Sisters
- reflect on the call to ministry and the response of these early Sisters
- facilitate personal reflection and discernment around our own call to ministry and the connection to our 'place'
- encourage personal action in contemporary ministry

Australian Pilgrimage Structure

Phase 1:	Perspective	immersion in the story we hear
Phase 2:	Participation	immersion in the places we stand, immersed with the people we follow
Phase 3:	Response	reflection from our heart

PHASE 1: PERSPECTIVE

- Understanding pilgrimage/pilgrim in Catholic tradition
- The Irish/Australian context
- Mary Aikenhead and the call to Australia
- The five Sisters: who and why?
- The ministries of the early Australian foundation

PHASE 2: PARTICIPATION

1. The places we stand:

- Sydney Harbour
- Sydney The Rocks Area
- Parramatta Gardens and Convent
- Parramatta Female Factory
- St Vincent's College

2. The people we follow:

- Mother Mary John Cahill
- Sister Mary de Sales O'Brien
- Sister Mary Baptist de Lacy
- Sister Mary Xavier Williams
- Sister Mary Lawrence Cator



3. Framework and Process:

- Visitation: standing in the places of the sisters
- Discernment: what did the sisters feel – what do we feel?
- Prayer: scripture/primary source
- Personal response: how are we called to action?
- Pre-reading and research: pilgrimage/MMA/charism/social context
- Connection with a Sister: family/vocation/response to the call
- Reflection: prior/during/post
- Shared journey around call to action

PHASE 3: RESPONDING TO THE SPIRIT

Some Questions:

- What do I now know about these Sisters as people and as religious?
- What has surprised me/challenged me/disappointed me/saddened me?
- How might the Australian context and the Sisters themselves have led to a 'reinterpretation' of the original charism and spirituality?
- What am I being called to do in my ministry by these early Sisters?