

## Sr Margaret Gilbraith



I was 26 when I became a Daughter of Charity and I am 81 now. What a life I have lived, before 26 and after!! When I told my dad I was going to become a sister he said "You're not meant for a life behind four walls" Well I have never been enclosed.

Before the age of 26 I was a teacher, first primary, then teaching French and Maths at Secondary level. I enjoyed youth hostelling, walking, and cycling. I also made most of my own clothes. I was an active Young Liberal; Proportional Representation was the bee in my bonnet! When I was 14 and at school I put my hand up to be a missionary, because cycling in the forest appealed to me! Then I forgot all about the notion until I was 24. I went to see a film called "Monsieur Vincent" and felt powerfully drawn to serve the poor. Later I came across a pamphlet about the Daughters of Charity. These were the external factors that influenced my decision to become a sister. The internal factor can only be the mystery of God's call at the core of my being (the 'fine point of the soul' as the French say) I became certain of this call during a Day of Retreat for teachers. This may seem strange, but for me my vocation is proof of the existence of God.

From the age of 26 to 56 teaching remained my main ministry, whether in Darlington, London, or Ethiopia where I was for 9 years. Alongside the teaching there were additional involvements such as the Marian Association, literacy for poor women, visiting the sick, the formation of young candidates and young sisters.....and I loved it all.

At 56 I left Ethiopia and spent a year studying in our Mother House in Paris. Back in England I worked in various parishes in London, then a hostel for the homeless in Manchester then in Bristol where I developed Marian devotion throughout the province. I also had short working trips to India and Eritrea helping in the formation of new Daughters of Charity. At 75 I retired from parish work but continued in pastoral care within our care facility for the blind and partially sighted. Throughout all of this I have also been involved in the AIC which is the modern version of the Ladies of Charity set up by St Vincent himself in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Now I am really retired in Pinner in London. I enjoy my more leisurely life pursuing my current hobbies: art, Italian, and New Testament Greek. I also visit our sisters being cared for in St Vincent's Nursing Home which is nearby. I have been very blessed, and at almost every change of mission, despite the wrench. I have felt "this is the best thing that has ever happened to me". God, the Community and the service of others. All three have immeasurably enriched and continue to enrich my life.