Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0012

Brazill, Johanna

(1895 - 1988)

Born	18951224, Bosnetstown County Limerick Ireland
Died	19880101, Geelong Victoria Australia
Occupation	Nurse, Religious Sister, Teacher

Summary

Sister Philippa, as she preferred to be known, took the religious name of Sister Mary Philippa at her Religious Profession to the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy on 10th January 1918. After graduating from the Teachers' Training College at Ascot Vale, she became a teacher in several Victorian Schools. In 1928 she transferred from teaching to nursing, completing her training at Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Brisbane. In 1935 she became foundation matron at the Mercy Private Hospital, where she introduced general nurse training.
From 1954 to 1959 she was appointed Provincial of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania, after which she returned to the Mercy Private Hospital.
In 1979 Sister Philippa was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for outstanding service to the people of Victoria and beyond, especially in the Health Care Field.
Two years later, on the 1 August, the University of Melbourne awarded Sister the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in recognition of her services to women and family life. She was the first nun to receive the award from the University.

Details

Born: 24 December 1895. Died: 1 January 1988.
Birth name: Johanna Brazill. Religious name: Sister Mary Philippa. Preferred to be called: Sister Philippa

Following her father's reluctant approval, Brazill sailed from Ireland to Melbourne to join the Religious Sisters of Mercy (RSM). In 1912, aged fourteen and a half, she had heard a talk by Mother Genevieve Buckley appealing for missionaries on behalf of the Victorian Mercy communities. Deciding upon a religious vocation, and with her mother's blessing, Brazill became one of the Irish girls recruited to join the Mercy Congregation in Australian. [1]
Before commencing her religious training, in 1915, Brazill completed her secondary education at Sacred Heart College, Geelong. Johanna Brazill made her first Religious Profession on 10 January 1918, taking the religious name of Sister Mary Philippa.

Citation read by Professor Colin Howard, chairman of the Melbourne University's academic board:

Mr Chancellor –
Sister Philippa Brazill was born in 1896 in Country Limerick, Ireland. She has given a lifetime of public service in Victoria, particularly in her long association with health care.
In 1915 she entered the congregation of the Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne for teacher training at Ascot Vale, and then was a teacher in several Victorian schools.
In 1928, Sister Philippa transferred from teaching to the nursing staff of St Benedict's Hospital, Malvern, which had been acquired by the Sisters of Mercy to begin their work of caring for the sick. She did her nursing training at Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Brisbane, and then returned to St Benedict's. She made a six months tour of American hospitals to gather ideas for incorporation into the plans of the St Benedict's Sisters for the establishment of a Hospital for Women. When the Mercy Private Hospital was opened in 1935, Sister Philippa became the first matron and was primarily responsible for setting its high stand of patient care, and for introducing general nurse training.
From 1954 to 1959, Sister Philippa's involvement in hospital work temporarily ceased when she was appointed Provincial of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria and Tasmania, then numbering approximately six hundred members. In this capacity, she gave strong and wise leadership within her religious Congregation in the administration of the various works associated with it, namely: primary, secondary and tertiary education, the care of orphaned and neglected children, and the care of the sick.
At the conclusion of this period of office Sister Philippa returned to the Mercy Private Hospital, and again assumed the responsibilities of Superior and Matron. The establishment of the Mercy Private Hospital in 1971 saw the fulfillment of one of her life's ambitions, as she had a particular interest in the welfare of women and family life.
In June 1979, Sister Philippa was created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Her Majesty, the Queen, for outstanding service to the people of Victoria and beyond, especially in the health care field, over the previous 50 years. In her semi-retirement, she is still actively involved in a pastoral role with the patients at the hospital and with the many people who have learned to value her wise counsel and insight.

Mr Chancellor,
I present to you,
Mary Philippa Brazill of the Sisters of Mercy,
Dame Commander of the British Empire
for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.

Published resources

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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Created 24 April 2002
Last modified 20 March 2026