

Reclaiming our roots



Breda O'Farrell, also from Ireland, was elected to replace Raphael as Superior General in 1975. She was 51. Elected initially for 8 years, and then re-elected for two 5-year terms, Breda is widely recognised as having injected the charism of the Faithful Companions of Jesus with new life and meaning.

She requested, and eventually received, permission for the FCJs to use the Jesuit Constitutions. A new text was established, and the longed-for, long-awaited approval was finally given in 1985. Breda foresaw that future changes to these Constitutions would be rare, but that interpretation through General Chapters would ensure their continuing relevance for the corporate life of the Society.

Breda's years as Superior General opened the Society to new horizons. Between 1975, when she took up office, and 1993, when she left it, there was virtually no establishment of 'institutions' in which a corporate ministry was carried out, as had happened in former times with the foundation of FCJ schools and colleges. Instead, smaller communities lived in smaller houses, their members involved in a variety of ministries in collaboration with other religious and lay people: teaching and spirituality, pastoral and chaplaincy work in parishes, schools, universities, prisons, care homes, hospices and hospitals. In addition, with Breda's blessing, small groups of sisters were sent to Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, South America, and, in the year before her term of office came to an end, to Romania in Eastern Europe. In these countries, new to the FCJs, the sisters engaged in certain educational ministries, especially the teaching of English and Theology, and in a variety of development projects and pastoral work.



Sr Breda O'Farrell with Fr Herbert Alphonso, SJ

Breda's generalate was marked by an opening up of new horizons for the Society, and she did this calmly and confidently, after appropriate preparation and inclusive consultation. She helped the Society to rediscover its charism, identity and spirituality, which she believed was its true heritage. Creativity in setting up new communities and ministries was encouraged, and in every province the fruitfulness of this approach was proved by the number of new initiatives researched and undertaken with the blessing and support of Breda and her Council. She had the ability to balance 'mission' and 'maintenance' with wisdom and courage and her contribution to the life and mission of the Society was gratefully acknowledged. Breda died in 2006, at the age of 82, in Limerick, Ireland.



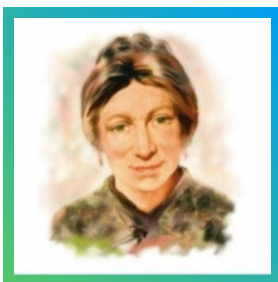
Srs Breda and Elizabeth with Bishop Ganda at the opening of the new school in Kailahun, Sierra Leone, 1979

New Foundations under Breda

- 1979: Kailahun, Sierra Leone, West Africa
- 1984: Córdoba, Argentina, South America
- 1986: New Hazelton, British Columbia, Canada
- 1986: Naters, Valais, Switzerland
- 1987: Clodomira, Argentina, South America
- 1987: Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia
- 1988: Tarija, Bolivia, South America
- 1988: Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines
- 1988: Naga, Mindanao, Philippines
- 1993: Kupang, West Timor



The first FCJs to live and work in South America established the house in Córdoba, Argentina, in 1985, in a poor parish on the outer rim of this city, the second largest in Argentina, working with the La Salette Missionaries



“ Por tener este Nombre, Fieles Compañeras de Jesús, daría todo, todo lo que soy... ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Fieles Compañeras de Jesús

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