

SISTER MARGARET MARY PRESS

Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Education (*honoris causa*)

Margaret Press was born in Molong in 1923 and educated at St Joseph's College Perthville. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of St Joseph in 1941 and was professed in 1943. During this time she also trained as a teacher and from 1944 to 1972, she established herself as one of the most highly respected educators in the Bathurst diocese; she was a teacher, boarding school administrator, school supervisor, lecturer in the Teacher Training School at Perthville and the first Deputy Principal of the Diocesan Catholic Girls' High School. In 1970 she became its distinguished Principal.

Perhaps it was the words of the psalmist that guided her work during this period:

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.
(Psalm 90:12)

Those who know her would say that her wisdom is characterised by a lively sense of humour, dedication to the task at hand and a profound commitment to issues of social justice and equity.

Sister Margaret is an eminent scholar. In 1955 she began studies as an external student at the University of New England and graduated in 1961 with First Class Honours in Latin. She took out a Diploma of Education in 1964 and became a tutor within the University's Classics Department in the same year. It was in April 1965 that she was awarded a Master of Arts with First Class Honours in Latin and the University Medal in Classics. This was the first occasion on which a medal had been awarded at Masters level.

After leaving the Diocesan Catholic Girls' High School at the end of 1972, Sister Margaret continued to teach, this time at a number of tertiary institutions. She lectured at the Catholic Teachers' College in Sydney where she was Head of the English Department. She was the Director of the Assumption Institute in Melbourne, Head of the Humanities Department of the Catholic Institute of Sydney and visiting scholar at Flinders University in Adelaide.

Sister Margaret is presently writing a history of St Margaret's Hospital at Darlinghurst. This history follows the publication of a number of esteemed works on Catholic community history. The renowned Catholic historian and scholar, Edmund Campion writes of Sister Margaret:

...Beginning with her masterly biography of Julian Tenison Woods (which is being republished) her books have been well reviewed and widely acknowledged as the best of their type. Her present project, however, lifts her onto a new plane of significance because St Margaret's Hospital, Darlinghurst, has an integral place in women's history in New South Wales. I am confident that her book will throw unexpected light from an unusual angle onto that history.

Charles Sturt University honours Sister Margaret as a distinguished teacher, teacher educator and scholar. But it honours her also for the significant role she played in the establishment of Mitchell College of Advanced Education, a predecessor institution of Charles Sturt University. She was one of only two women appointed to the Interim Council of Mitchell College of Advanced Education in 1968 and was a member of the permanent Council until 1979. During this period, through her considered and perceptive contributions to the Council and its various committees, she helped set the direction for an institution that has provided opportunities for tertiary education for many people, and especially for people from regional communities in New South Wales.

It was Sister Margaret who suggested the College's motto:

Simul Ante Retroque Prospiciens

which, freely translated, means *to look to the past and to the future, together*. These words come from Vergil's *Aeneid* and remind us that the strength of our future draws on an understanding and appreciation of the past. These words also capture something of the qualities and disposition of Margaret Press: a member of the Sisters of St Joseph, teacher, scholar and historian; a woman whose interest in the past allows her better to affirm the special role of education in enlivening the mind and the spirit.

Dated this Twelfth Day of May One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety Four