

## Sisters Judith (Winifred) O'Donnell

26 July 1917 – 26 April 2014

Winifred O'Donnell, later Sr Judith, was born in Ekatahuna on July 26th 1917, the youngest of 6 children. She was the daughter of William and Jane O'Donnell who had emigrated from Ireland. Judy's father died when she was only 7 and so her mother was left to bring up her large family on her own. She was brought up on a farm and went to Primary and Secondary School in Ekatahuna. She was already a trained teacher with some years of teaching experience, when she entered our Congregation in Karori in 1945. As a Marist Sister she lived and worked as a primary school teacher in Herne Bay, Karori and Mount Albert. She also spent some time in Australia and was ten years in Fiji, in Vatakoula and Lautoka. From 1981 till about 1995 she was a remedial teacher in Karori till her retirement to Mount Albert. One of our sisters said about her: *She had a lovely presence with the children and a quiet discipline.* In her retirement she continued to contact her ex-pupils and take a real interest in their lives and in fact had quite an extensive ministry to many people either through telephone calls or visits. In 2007 since she was becoming more frail she went in to Mary McKillop Rest home and from there to Mercy Parklands for the last three years of her life.

Someone who lived for many years with Judith wrote the following:

*"We first lived together in Karori from 1986 – 1990. There were many things to recall from that time but two that stand out most. For many years Judy did voluntary remedial teaching at St Teresa's. Ignoring the Wellington weather she would wrap her enormous black hooded raincoat about her bony frame and glide from the house to the school library where she sat huddled by a two bar radiator. One by one, children needing individual help would arrive or be fetched if they forgot. Those who tried to avoid work would be relentlessly kept on track for their allotted half hour. This was of huge benefit to both the children and their teachers as no other assistance was available. The other feature of Judy's life from this time was her enormous ability for small talk. She could effortlessly keep a conversation going with the most awkward of guests for as long as was needed. Judy and I also lived together in Mt Albert from 2001 – 2007 and it was during the latter part of this time that I had the privilege of helping her with her personal care. I came to know and appreciate her on a much deeper level. She had an extremely funny sense of humour which she never lost despite the suffering she endured due to the diminishment of old age. She was very grateful for the care she received and tolerant of the ineptitude of her carers. Judy*

*appeared to be a very law abiding person but once engaged in the daily Rummikub tournament demonstrated a very cavalier attitude to the rules of the game, cheating with impunity. It was she who decided that it was time to move into rest home care and did so with huge courage and faith. “*

No one ever heard Judith say anything uncharitable or mean about another person including her pupils. She was unfailingly gentle and gracious. The last months of her life were difficult since she was totally dependent on her carers at Mercy Parklands. She could not walk or do anything for herself. They told me that she never complained so that it was difficult to know if she had any pain. Many of them told me that they loved her and that they will miss her very much.

To conclude: One of our sisters told me that she mentioned to Judy that she was very worried about something. Judy's answer was: "That's not your business! It's God's!" She strove all her life to do God's will, sometimes with anguish, not always realising that God only smiled at her tiny weaknesses.

Judy died peacefully on 26 April 2014 at 4.40p.m in the presence of four of her sisters and was buried at the Panmure Cemetery together with a large number of her Marist Sisters who preceded her into Eternal life.

We rejoice with her as she enjoys the eternal joy of God's unconditional and total love for her.

Sr. Gemma Wilson SM