

Amalgamation of Mercy Sisters in Tuam

Work on amalgamation culminated in the formation of the First Chapter, which opened on 2nd August, 1971, and with the promulgation of the Decree by Archbishop Cunnane, the new Religious Congregation of Pontifical Rite came into being. Mother Paschal Donoghue, was elected as Superior, Srs. Bonaventure Lyons, Clare Moylan, Pius Dyer and Máire Cannon as Councillors. *Arus Mhuire* was chosen as the Generalate on the 12th December, 1971. This was also the Diocesan Novitiate. A lot of work was done in uniting the five groups.

Then began the work of reimagining Religious Life. A time of questioning began and new possibilities for change in Religious Life. Nothing remained static as Sisters looked at Community Life, Vows, Ministry, Prayer and our image of God. The traditional form of community life and uniformity was challenged, small group living was explored, working in different ministries, more and more shared responsibility was pursued. Ministry became de-institutionalised and Sisters looked at the Vows and Prayer in a new way. There was huge excitement as emphasis was “on the new thing emerging over the horizon.”

Young women were still entering and *Árus Mhuire* Novitiate opened in 1971. This building was sold to the Health Board 23rd February, 1981. The short period of time it operated as a Novitiate is an indication of the fall in vocations during that short period.

Teach Muire Hostel Maynooth then in 1971 to provide accommodation for Sisters studying at Maynooth University. The Hostel was vacated in September 1986 and sold in October 1987. This is another indication of the fall in religious vocations.

In 1986, a full year's preparation for Chapter 1981, was carried out with Fr. Louis Dolan. Fr. Louis stretched the imagination of the Sisters by the articles they studied and their shared dreams and aspirations were noted. The present reality was then studied and disappointments acknowledged. Finally, a “Desired Future” was compared with the current reality. Out of all the hard work, prayer and reflection emerged the Document “The Desired Future” based on a global vision, global community and global consciousness. Many things seemed possible and in the midst of anxiety about the future, a great energy took over once again with greater trust in an ever-loving God. It was another moment for new beginnings in the Diocese.