

Mercy Ireland

As I said above, in the short time allowed me, I greatly regret that cannot possibly go into details about all the very committed, inspiring and generous service of the Downpatrick Mercy community for almost 160 years.... Even had I the time, enough could never be said....

Time passes and brings unexpected developments. Because of the changes proposed for the updating of religious life recommended by the Second Vatican Council (the 1960s), the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, world-wide, had to undertake the renewal of their structures in order to facilitate the updating of their mission to meet the modern world. In 1981 the Mercy communities in Belfast and Downpatrick merged to form the Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Down and Connor Diocese. In 1994 they united with the Mercy communities of the whole of Ireland, along with their mission Regions in Africa, North and South America and elsewhere, to form the 'Union of the Sisters of Mercy, Ireland'.

These new Unions had distinct repercussions on the lives of the Sisters of Mercy of counties Antrim and Down. We are still around, thank God, but may not be so clearly recognisable. In keeping with our various Mercy apostolates, you will now find us spread through many different houses and convents. Our schools and other institutions have been passed on to Diocesan Trusteeship. It has been said of apostolic religious life: "If your mission has been successful, it is ready to be passed on to new leaders". This is in keeping with the concept of religious life which is the vocation of the Sisters of Mercy. For the Sisters, there are always 'fresh fields and pastures new'.

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