

Welcome to Guntur...



Jewell Start
General President
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The news that our founding President, Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ, was to be declared a Servant of God by the Most Rev Dr Gali Bali, Bishop of Guntur, at the Chrism Mass at the Infant Jesus Cathedral, Phirangipuram, on the 27th March 2013, came like a bolt from the blue! Thanks to the kind offices of the Archbishop of Melbourne, Archbishop Denis Hart, I was deeply honoured and privileged to be able to represent the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga at this momentous occasion, along with Fr Dan Strickland MGL.

Our time in India passed very quickly leaving a blur of impressions. We were enveloped by vibrant colours and noises as we travelled from place to place with cars, motor bikes, people, taxi cabs, trucks, buses, auto rickshaws and bullocks all sharing the road. The JMJ (Society of Jesus Mary Joseph) Provincial Houses in Hyderabad, Mangalagiri and Bangalore were an oasis of calm, where we were blessed to share time in prayer and contemplation with the JMJ sisters.

One of the highlights of our visit to Guntur was a tour of St Joseph's Hospital where Dr Sr Mary Glowrey had worked so tirelessly for 37 years. Walking in her footsteps was truly humbling. The places where Mary worked and lived have been lovingly preserved, and there are photos of her throughout the hospital to inspire others working in the JMJ health apostolate. We were also blessed to meet several elderly JMJ sisters who had worked with Dr Sr Mary Glowrey, and cared for her in the final months of her life. Listening to their stories made Mary Glowrey 'come to life' for us.

Being declared a Servant of God is the first of four official approvals on the path to sainthood and signals the commencement of the Diocesan Phase of the Inquiry. So, the Chrism Mass celebrated by the Most Rev Dr Gali Bali, Bishop of Guntur, on the 27th of March was a momentous occasion. It is difficult to express in words how incredibly joyous and deeply moving it was to be present as a witness, and to share in this experience with the JMJ sisters, the representatives of the Catholic Health Association of India, and the local community. An estimated 7000 people attended the outdoor Mass held in the precinct adjacent to the magnificent Infant Jesus Cathedral. Over 400 JMJ sisters were present with large contingents from other provinces, some taking more than 14 hours to travel to Phirangipuram. Approximately 200 priests, led by Bishop Gali Bali, processed in and then Mass was celebrated around a beautifully decorated altar.

When Bishop Gali Bali pronounced Dr Sr Mary Glowrey a Servant of God, he presented Sr Regina Mary with scrolls in English and Telegu. His announcement was met with rapturous applause and a sea of flags, depicting the bond between Australia and India forged by Mary Glowrey, were waved by thousands present. A stunning portrait of Mary was unveiled, and Fr Dan and I placed candles before it while the JMJ sisters placed flowers as a mark of respect for the extraordinary life and work of Dr Sr Mary Glowrey.

After Mass, there were many photos taken to commemorate the occasion and then we shared in a wonderful celebratory meal.



The next morning, the JMJ sisters had kindly arranged for us to fly to Bangalore to visit Mary Glowrey's grave in a beautifully quiet, tree shaded area, in the Catholic cemetery. We lit candles and placed flowers on her grave, and then prayed together with the JMJ sisters. We also lit candles and placed flowers on the grave of Dr Sr Ethel Pitt, Sr Veronica of the Holy Face, another Australian doctor who cared for Mary Glowrey in her final months. Dr Ethel Pitt graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery in 1922. Although Ethel had not known Mary Glowrey prior to joining her at St Joseph's Hospital in Guntur in 1934, Ethel's father and Mary's mother had been playmates in Colac. Ethel Pitt was also a member of the then Catholic Women's Social Guild, now known as the Catholic Women's League. In 1937, Sr Veronica was transferred to the JMJ convent in Bangalore and founded St Philomena's Hospital. It is now a 375 bed hospital and nursing college.

On the way to the Hyderabad airport to fly home, we were invited to visit the Catholic Health Association India (CHAI) Headquarters in Secunderabad. CHAI is celebrating 70 years since Dr Sr Mary Glowrey founded the Association in 1943 to teach and safeguard Catholic principles in medical and nursing matters, and provide health care to the poor and marginalised. Although our visit was very rushed, we gained a sense of the tremendous work being achieved by this important organisation which has grown to become one of the largest health care providers in the world.

As I reflect back on our journey to India, I picture the beautiful smiles of all those we met, and I pray that if it be God's will, Dr Sr Mary Glowrey will soon be numbered among His saints.



Mary Glowrey was born on 23rd June 1887 in the small township of Birregurra in Victoria, Australia. When Mary was thirteen, she won a scholarship to attend school at South Melbourne College. She graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1910 with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery. In 1920, Mary Glowrey left her thriving career and sailed for India to become a medical missionary with the Congregation of the Society of Jesus Mary Joseph in Guntur. Dr Sr Mary Glowrey was said to radiate Christ by word and example. The poor were the people of her choice and incurable patients had a special place in her heart. Mary never attempted anything without praying to the Holy Spirit, knowing that with the help of the Holy Spirit all things are possible. For the last two years of her life, she shouldered the Cross of excruciating physical pain which she bore with extraordinary courage and patience.

Dr Sr Mary Glowrey died in Bangalore on Sunday, May 5th 1957. Her cause for canonisation commenced in November 2010. www.cwlvicww.org