

Resolution of Council

31 October 2022

Item 13.6

Honouring Eileen O'Connor

Moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) on 10 January 1921, Eileen O'Connor who was a Servant of God and a holy woman, passed away at the age of 28;
- (ii) Eileen has now been declared by Pope Francis as a 'Servant of God', a title given by the Pope in recognition that one's life was holy and deserves further investigation as a potential saint;
- (iii) Eileen's life was one filled with physical suffering and immense pain stemming from her disabilities which confined her to being in a wheelchair and bed ridden for most of her life;
- (iv) the O'Connor family moved from Melbourne to Sydney in 1902. The O'Connor family moved to 144 Baptist Street, Redfern, then to Telopea Street, Redfern. Eileen attended Mass and school here at Waterloo for a period of time;
- (v) despite her struggle with mobility and through sheer perseverance Eileen would often crawl up the hill to pray and attend Mass in this church. Sometimes her brothers would carry her up the hill;
- (vi) Eileen persevered through her adversities and utilised the skills and insights she gained from them to co-found Our Lady's Nurses for the poor. They provided free nursing services to the poor;
- (vii) Eileen lived in a time when healthcare wasn't readily available for the poorest people in Australian society. In her diaries, she wrote a beautiful reflection about the mission to serve the sick and dying poor and worked with the most marginalised people in Waterloo and Eastern suburbs to do so;

- (viii) a non-Catholic doctor who cared for Eileen at Our Lady's Home once remarked to Fr McGrath 'that there is something ethereal about Eileen, and when in her presence you feel you want to be better';
 - (ix) you must not lay things aside because they are small or of little use. You must also be sure to care for others, not to be indifferent because you do not like or need them;
 - (x) Eileen demonstrates what it means to be utterly and truly selfless, an exemplary human and devoted to making this world better;
 - (xi) it is people such as Eileen who characterise a community and inspire us all to do our best to make a difference, a pursuit we all here have in common;
 - (xii) Rev. Anthony Fisher most eloquently put it, "Eileen's life was a life of immense suffering... that she is on her way to possibly being our next saint shows even a short life marked by incredible suffering, can be an inspiration to all and remind us of the dignity of every human life"; and
 - (xiii) her holiness and virtue have been recognised by the Holy See and the cause for her canonisation opened by the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints; and
- (B) Council acknowledge and honour Eileen O'Connor's notable contributions to the City as a woman of God and a member of the community.

Carried unanimously.

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