



Sr Mary Cleary MSS

Diocese of Toowoomba

Mary is a Missionary Sister of Service who has been the appointed Pastoral Leader of the Jandowae Parish since 1999. For most of those years Mary has been the only church leader in the town which is situated 48 Kilometres north of Dalby, the centre of a thriving wheat and cattle farming area.

One of the great strengths that Mary brings to the role is that of assisting lay people to use their gifts in the service of the community. Every second Sunday, there is a Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion and Mary trains lay people to lead this service. Mary has the ability to encourage people, especially older people, to participate and to discover their hidden talents and contribute them for the benefit of the parish and local community. Like any good pastoral leader, Mary holds services at the Retirement Village. She also holds Ecumenical Bible studies.

Until recently, in addition to offering pastoral support to a diverse range of local people, Mary conducts funerals in other churches at times when there is no other minister available. She has been given permission to perform Baptisms in the Catholic community and she conducts funerals and presides at regular weekend liturgies in the Catholic parish on those weekends when a visiting priest is not scheduled to visit Jandowae. Mary has obtained a Civil Marriage Celebrant licence, and while she has yet to officiate at any marriages, as a long time friend to those who are unchurched, that is sure to happen in the future. One of her parishioners explained that Mary is a friend to all, not just to the Catholics in town.

Mary sees it as important to keep up her theological knowledge and engage others in town in ongoing faith formation. Last year, Mary's work as a woman of the church was recognized when her story was featured on the Compass programme.