



**Mary McPhee**  
Diocese of Wagga Wagga

Mary has been an inspirational, influential, passionate and committed Catholic Woman from an early age. These outstanding qualities are evident in her diverse roles as loving and committed wife and mother of six, passionate teacher of science and religion in secondary Catholic schools, faith educator of many adults in her parish, missionary in PNG and friend and advocate to refugees, as well as chairperson of an East Timorese Support Group.

Mary's faith and work ethic were nurtured by her farming family as she grew up as one of 10 children at Tumberumba. She entered the Sisters of St Joseph in 1968 and during the next 9 years studied scripture, theology and spirituality, whilst teaching in schools in the Goulbourn and Riverina areas. During this period she also obtained a bachelor of science from ANU and a Diploma of Education from UNE.

The next phase of Mary's life involved an amazing partnership with her husband Peter. Initially they were involved with the Marist community at St Francis College at Leeton. Together they worked as PALMS volunteers at a seminary near Rabaul in PNG. They returned to Leeton where they were heavily involved in parish life for the next six years and then returned to PNG to assist in the education of young men.

Since 1991 the family has lived in Leeton and Mary, in between the birth of her children, has been a stalwart of the St Josephs Parish. She and Peter established the RCIA or Catechumenate and Mary has co-ordinated this program since 1992. She represents the Wagga Wagga Diocese in the Australian Catechumenate. Other areas of parish involvement and leadership include baptismal formation programs, parish liturgy committees, ecumenical liturgies and Passionist Family Groups. Mary and Peter also represented the Australian Church in its rural dimension at the World Meeting of Families in Spain in 2006.

Mary's commitment to social justice has been obvious through her involvement in RAR (Rural Action for Refugees) and support for local Afghani Refugees, as well as ongoing leadership in supporting the "friends of Luro" group and her recent visits to Timor Leste.

In summation, Mary has made a significant contribution to her Leeton parish and Wagga Wagga Diocese, the Leeton community and to the needs of less fortunate at an international level.

