



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

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Pioneer Australian Catholic woman, Rosemary Goldie dies at 94

The Catholic Church in Australia is today commemorating the extraordinary life and achievements of one of its unsung heroines, Rosemary Goldie, the first woman ever to hold an official post of authority in the Roman Curia.

Rosemary, who took on a special place in Church history with her appointment in 1966 as Under-Secretary of the Council for the Laity, died at the Little Sisters of the Poor, Randwick on Saturday evening 27 February at 94.

Once described as “the Roman Curia’s human microchip memory on the development of the lay apostolate”, Rosemary was also one of the few women appointed as an auditor to the Second Vatican Council.

One of four children of Sydney journalists, Goldie was raised by her maternal grandmother and graduated from Sydney University in 1936. For the next two years she continued her studies at the Sorbonne in Paris.

At Easter 1938 she made her first trip to Rome. Returning some years later Rosemary was invited to join the Permanent Committee for International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate set up in Rome by Pius XII in 1952. In 1959 she became Executive Secretary of the Committee. This body was the nucleus of the Council for the Laity, created by Paul VI as a result of Vatican II. In 1966, Goldie, dramatically, was appointed Under-Secretary of the Council.

Rosemary was one of the small group of women - lay and religious - appointed as auditors for the last two periods of Vatican II (1964 and 1965). The lay auditors attended the plenary meetings of the Council - as silent witnesses - but also took an active part in commission work on the Lay Apostolate Decree and Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

Rosemary later went on to become Vice-President and Professor on the Lay Apostolate in the Pastoral Institute of the Lateran University.

She returned to Australia in her later years and retained an active interest in the life and development of the lay apostolate.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Phillip Wilson said Rosemary had made a tremendous contribution to the life of the church.

“At a time when lay people and particularly lay women might have struggled to find a voice in Church affairs, Rosemary Goldie was making history by being the first woman appointed as a Vatican curial official,” he said.

“Her commitment to the lay apostolate was a life-long passion and her achievements helped pave the way for current generations.

“I offer my prayers for the repose of Rosemary’s soul and for all those who knew and loved her at this sad time.”

For media enquiries, please contact Beth Doherty on 0407 081 256