



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

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FoSS founder hands over after 40 years

Stewardship of the Australian founded *Friends of the Suffering Souls* (FoSS) was formally handed to the Australia New Zealand international Catholic organisation, *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN) this week.

FoSS is a lay lead Catholic association and registered charity which facilitates Masses for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

It was founded in the early 1980s in regional NSW by Ben Forshaw, a solicitor. Born in Taree in 1943, the son of a railway worker, Ben boarded at Holy Cross Ryde and Woodlawn Lismore, NSW. His father and brother both died at young ages.

Inspired by stories of Our Lady of Knock (Ireland, 1879) and the actions of Father Bartholomew Cavanagh who had said 100 consecutive masses for the Holy Souls prior to the Knock apparition, Forshaw organised 100 consecutive masses locally, recruiting 100 people by word of mouth to each sponsor a Mass.

Buoyed by the enthusiastic response to this first initiative, Forshaw aimed to find 365 people who would contribute to have one Mass said each day of the year for the Holy Souls.

Forshaw recalls "I originally envisioned 300-400 members, but it snowballed because of the love people have for their family and friends who have died. People were really grateful to have the opportunity".

Forty years later there are 11 000 members in 78 countries actively organising over 45 000 Masses annually. Members report experiencing consolation, spiritual enrichment, and a feeling of belonging to the universal church.

The majority of FoSS members are in Australia.

Joan, from regional Queensland, a member for over 20 years recalls, "FoSS appealed to me because family members had passed on." However, she has also enrolled living family members and organises for Masses to be said on their birthdays each year, "It's so easy. FoSS always sends a reminder."

Joan adds "I am happy when overseas priests (through ACN) say the Masses as this helps to support and spread the faith in poorer countries."

Other members are attracted to FoSS because of strong family memories of praying for those who have died. Sarah, a retired registered nurse from Melbourne, remembers her father praying for the

deceased each day with their names on the Columban Calendar. “I have been a member for 22 years and enrolled both the living and the deceased, especially struggling family members, as every Mass helps so much.”

For Therese, a Clinical Psychologist from regional Queensland, “Membership of FoSS kills two birds with one stone. It helps the living and the deceased. The financial contribution assists missionary priests, and the masses assist the souls in purgatory.”

Therese concludes “To be able to do so much good with so little effort, why wouldn’t you?” West Australian Priest Fr. Bernard Balaraj has had contact with Ben Forshaw and believes “FoSS is a very enriching enterprise.” Fr Balaraj notes Canon Law which states “The salvation of souls... is to be kept before one's eyes.” He believes “FoSS accomplishes this in its fullness.”

Founder Ben Forshaw, who turns 80 in December is delighted about the handover. “That ACN has taken responsibility is an answer to prayer.” The transition is now finalised after some years of discussion and planning.

Perry Mowbray, the new FoSS coordinator aims to take FoSS forward, building on the original vision of “helping the souls in purgatory through having masses said.” Thus, ACN will promote FoSS through parishes this November.

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