

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 21/22 January 2023. So many deaths during these first weeks of 2023, but the one I want to speak about is that of Sr. André Randon. She died in her sleep this Tuesday past, 17th January, at the age of 118 years and 340 days, the worlds oldest living person at that time.

She was born as Lucile on the 11th February 1904 in the small South Western French town of Alès, the youngest of 5 children in a Protestant family, a rarity in then largely Catholic France. In 1916 at the age of 12, in the middle of the 1st World War, she went to work in Marseille as a governess of 3 young children, a not uncommon experience back then. In 1922, aged 18, she took on more responsibilities becoming a governess and teacher to a well known family in Versailles. She remained in that position until 1936, having lived through the roaring 20's, the Great Depression and the social upheavals of the 1930's.

In 1923, a year after arriving at Versailles and aged 19 years, Lucile chose to become a Catholic. It seems that she was in no rush about her future though, not joining the Catholic Order of the Daughters of Charity until 1944, this time in the middle of the 2nd World War. She then took the name Sr. André in honour of her older brother. When this war ended she was sent to work in a hospital in city of Vichy, serving orphans and the elderly. Remember that during the 2nd World War Vichy was the centre of the Vichy Regime under Marshal Pétain which actively collaborated with the Nazis. She served this ministry for 18 years before being moved in 1963 to work in a hospital in a tiny village in the Drôme region.

In 1979, now aged 75, she retired from full time work, entering an aged care home. Here though Sr. André continued to be active looking after the needs of others until she turned 100. Then, in 2009 at 105 years of age, yet another change as she moved to full retirement at a home in Toulon. Having gone blind in 2010 she also survived a Covid infection in 2021 which killed many residents making her the oldest known survivor of this plague on our times. All of this sounds quite remarkable doesn't it, but I think it does so because Sr. André lived for so long. Had she not her life and service, as with most of us, would have passed by largely unnoticed.

Matthew tells us that Jesus called his first disciples to leave everything and follow him. He calls us to do the same today. We know a fair bit about Peter, Andrew, James and John, something about Thomas and of course Judas Iscariot, but not a lot at all about the other 6 disciples. From this fact we come to realise that receiving and responding generously to our Lord's call isn't about being noticed and doing great things. It's actually all about our faithfulness in doing what we can to help others and to witness the gospel wherever we find ourselves, often in circumstances that are largely beyond our control. We have to remember is that 2000 years ago Galilee was nothing much and Nazareth even less, yet look at who and what grew from such humble places and simple beginnings!

Now, our call is to follow where our Lord leads us like Sr. André did, helping others and sharing Jesus love and life in every way that we can, knowing that the future always belongs to God. For our faith assures us that God loves us unconditionally, greatly values all we try to do and never leaves or forgets us on our journey of faith, be our life long or short.