

Walk with Us (Luke 24:15)
"Stay with Us" and eat (Luke 24:29-30)
Sharing the Good News with "Hearts Burning" (Luke 24:32-33)

CAROLINE CHISHOLM

1808-1877



Caroline Chisholm - Courtesy of the National Library of Australia

Caroline Chisholm lived out the Gospel values of Hospitality, Love, Service, Humility and Forgiveness.

Hospitality

Caroline Chisholm began life as Caroline Jones in the English country town of Northampton in 1808. Her father was a landowner and a pig-dealer, and a man of honour and integrity. Her mother was kind and cheerful, and neither of them knew the meaning of the word meanness, either spiritually or materially. Caroline was christened and grew up as part of the Church of England. As she grew, she became convinced that God was calling her to dedicate her life to help people in need. After her marriage and after much thought, Caroline became a Catholic in 1831. In 1838, Caroline Chisholm arrived in New South Wales with her husband and children. She soon became horrified by the desperate situation of single emigrant women who were exploited when they first arrived. She was an immensely practical woman and resolved to do something about it. She regularly met ships to greet the young arrivals to ensure they did not fall into the clutches of people anxious to take advantage of them.

Love and Service

Her religious faith inspired her work in helping the young women of the colony. This is the vow she made before the altar in St Mary's Cathedral in 1841: ***"I promise to know neither country nor creed, but to try to serve all justly and impartially."***

Caroline did her best to make arrangements for the women, offering some of them refuge in her own home. Eventually, she persuaded Governor Gipps to allocate a building to be used as a hostel where girls could be accommodated while they were looking for work or life-partners. In 1846 the family returned to England to organise fairer, safer emigration for families and young women and to work for the reunion of husbands, fathers or sons who had emigrated.

She also organised the Family Colonisation Loan Society to encourage whole family migration, emphasising the positive role of women and children in Australia and helping and advising from her own experience. She became known as the Emigrant's Friend.

Humility and Forgiveness

Caroline and Archibald lived out their last years quietly and privately and in relative poverty. They had never owned their own home, and they did not amass savings or spend on their comfort the money Archibald earned. Rather, while raising and educating their children and meeting their own living costs, they returned the major share to the Lord through their good works. Caroline Chisholm died in London on 25 March, 1877, having been bedridden for the last few years, and Archibald died five months later. They lacked wealth and material possessions but left a legacy of reformed and changed lives, united families and happy homes.

Prayer (Feast Day 16th May)

Dear God, We thank you, most loving and merciful God, for the admirable life of Caroline Chisholm, who heard your call in youth and responded as a woman of patient, energetic faith.

With the support of her husband Archibald and her children, she assisted people in need, irrespective of their country or creed, by social reforms and charitable work, especially re-uniting families, protecting vulnerable girls, placing the unemployed in gainful work and achieving improvements for poor emigrants. Help us to follow her example of Christian commitment and untiring, resourceful service. Amen.