

# SISTERS OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

**STUDY AND MENTORING PROGRAM  
2022**





# SAM PROGRAM

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### *Who are the Sisters of the Good Samaritan?*

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict are a group of religious women within the Catholic Church who seek God – the God who impels us to be neighbour.

We were the first religious Congregation founded in Australia, and as our name suggests, our work and prayer are both enlivened by the Parable of the Good Samaritan and nourished by the ancient wisdom of the Rule of St Benedict.

We were co-founded in 1857 by Archbishop John Bede Polding, an English Benedictine monk; and Mother Scholastica Gibbons, an Irish Sister of Charity. From the outset, we committed ourselves to assisting vulnerable women and children in the fledgling penal colony of Sydney.

For more than 165 years, we have responded to God's invitation to be neighbour in community together, with other like-minded women. We commit ourselves to seeking God, to be of service to others and to a communal way of life.

Our work in responding to the call to be neighbour in different ways, times and places continues to this day, fulfilling Polding's vision for us as missionary Benedictines in Australia, Japan, the Philippines and Kiribati.

## *What is the SAM program?*

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan Study and Mentoring (SAM) Program aims to promote women's leadership within the Catholic Church. It offers support to mature-aged (age 30+) Catholic women as they undertake undergraduate or postgraduate theological or spiritual study at a recognised theological institution.

Since our foundation and throughout our 165+ year history, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan have been committed to the flourishing of women. We have educated girls and women from preschool to tertiary levels. We have also been engaged in adult education and adult faith formation. We have not only educated women, but have also accompanied them as mentors, counsellors, spiritual directors and friends.

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan recognise the need for women's leadership within the Catholic Church, because only when women contribute their experience and wisdom can the Church truly fulfil God's mission. The Church suffers when women's gifts are not called upon.

In his October 2020 prayer intention Pope Francis asked everyone to pray that women be given greater leadership roles in the Church: *Today, it is especially necessary to create broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church... We must promote the integration of women, especially where important decisions are made.*

Inspired and informed by our Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition, key components of the SAM Program are Spiritual Direction, Mentoring and Gatherings with like-minded women.

## *What is Spiritual Direction?*

Spiritual direction in essence is a simple process of companionship where two people – the director and the one being companioned – together discover and explore the mysterious and unique ways God is present and active in a person's life.

Such discovery fosters spiritual growth and is often expressed in a deeper commitment to the needs of our world. The focus of spiritual direction is then a person's experience, his or her lived reality in the particular circumstances of his or her life.

While these will inevitably include conversations about matters such as family, relationships, experiences of joy or grief, life and death, work or mission, social and environmental concerns to name a few, the primary focus is listening for the religious dimension of a person's story. It is this attention that "evokes the presence of the mysterious Other whom we call God" (*The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Barry and Connolly, p.8).

Spiritual direction then is more about experiencing God rather than engaging in theological or religious discussions about God. It is concerned with what is real, personal and important in a person's everyday life. Despite the usual meaning of the word "direction" is not about telling someone what to do or how to be. Neither is it about teaching or indoctrination.

Spiritual direction is much more akin to "contemplative listening" during which the "director" creates a safe space for someone to share her inner landscape with another—and so discovers God's active presence in her life.

*Kathleen Spokes SGS*

## *What is the role of my Spiritual Director?*

Spiritual direction is a key component of the SAM Program and is offered to all applicants. Our spiritual directors are all Sisters of the Good Samaritan and four sessions are provided free of charge for those who wish to take up the offer.

You will be paired with a personal spiritual director and provided with their email address. For some, it may be possible to meet face to face; in most cases however, the sessions would take place via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes.

It is the responsibility of the SAM Scholar to initiate contact with their spiritual director and to set up the Zoom meetings at a mutually convenient time. If you need assistance with this, please be in touch with the SAM Program Coordinator.

These are personal conversations, and there is no accountability for these sessions to the SAM Program Coordinator. It would be helpful let us know when the four sessions have been completed.

Should you wish to continue with your spiritual director after the four sessions provided by the program have been completed, this would be in negotiation with your director and at your own personal expense.

## *What is the role of my Mentor?*

Promoting leadership and the voice of women in the Catholic Church is a key principle of the SAM Program and underpins the way in which the program is offered. The opportunity to work with a mentor for four sessions is provided to those who receive a SAM Scholarship.

Our mentors all have great depth of knowledge and experience in Catholic leadership, and in the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition. Conversations with a mentor allow you to draw on the wisdom of a trusted advisor and to develop strategies to enhance academic and professional competencies. A possible structure for the Mentoring Program is suggested below.

### *Preparation*

Set expectations for mentoring, conduct of session, confidentiality, boundaries of the relationship.

### *Agreements*

The mentor and mentee discuss goals. The mentor assists the mentee to develop a plan for achieving their goals including clearly defined tasks.

### *Enabling*

The mentor supports mentee in following their plan as well as facilitating reflection, providing feedback and accountability.

### *Closure*

Closure involves reflection on learning. What have the mentor and mentee learned about themselves through the process? How can this learning be applied?

As with Spiritual Direction, you will be paired with a mentor and provided with their email address. For some, it may be possible to meet face to face; in most cases however, the sessions would take place via Zoom for approximately 45 minutes.

It is the responsibility of the SAM Scholar to initiate contact with their mentor and to set up the Zoom meetings at a mutually convenient time. If you need assistance with this, please be in touch with the SAM Program Coordinator.

Again, these are personal conversations, and there is no accountability for these sessions to the SAM Program Coordinator. It would be helpful let us know when the four sessions have been completed.

### *How do I access my SAM Scholarship funding?*

SAM Scholarship funding is allocated based on the needs of each individual scholar, and the requirements of their particular program of study. You would have received a letter at the end of last year outlining your acceptance into the program and your level of funding for 2022.

These are the steps to follow in order to access your funding:

1. enrol in your program of study at a SAM approved institution
2. pay the fees either upfront or through a HECS-HELP loan
3. at the end of the semester forward your:
  - transcript indicating you have passed the unit
  - receipt for payment of fees for the unit
  - bank details for the transfer of funds to:  
[samleadership@goodsams.org.au](mailto:samleadership@goodsams.org.au)

As well as course fees, SAM Scholarship funds may be used to purchase resources such as laptops, software, internet subscriptions, books and journals; and/or services such as childcare, travel and accommodation.

All purchases must be in direct support of your program of study, and approval must be obtained from the SAM Program Coordinator prior to purchase.

All allocated SAM Scholarship funds must be used within the 2022 calendar year.

## *What are the SAM Program dates for 2022?*

The SAM Program dates for 2022 are:

26 February:  
SAM Scholars Orientation Session

21 May:  
SAM Gathering 1

17 September:  
SAM Gathering 2

12 November:  
SAM Scholars Final Gathering

Reminders, details and Zoom links will be sent prior to each gathering.

## *Who do I contact?*

All enquiries regarding the SAM Program may be directed to [samleadership@goodsams.org.au](mailto:samleadership@goodsams.org.au)

or to

Dr Monica Dutton  
SAM Program Coordinator  
[mdutton@goodsams.org.au](mailto:mdutton@goodsams.org.au)  
0447 668 876

