

# Australasian Newsletter

## Sisters of Nazareth



21<sup>st</sup> Edition  
May 2023

Three Sisters make their  
First Profession for Australasia

# Easter Reflection

Happy Easter everyone!

I came across this reflection when I was thinking about what to write. Fr. John Cullen, the author of the reflection, is the Chaplain at Nazareth House, Hammersmith. His inspiring words say it all!



*Sr. Mary Monaghan*

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ALLELUIA – the world-wide, wonder-word for resurrection!

You probably do not remember the name Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin. It is a mouthful!! During his day he was as powerful a man as there was on earth. A Russian Communist leader, he took part in the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. He was editor of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (which, by the way, means ‘Truth’), and he was a full member of the Politburo. His works on economics and science are still read today.

There is a story told about a journey he took from Moscow to Kiev in 1930 to address a huge assembly on the subject of atheism. Addressing the crowd, he aimed his heavy verbal artillery at Christianity, hurling insulting argument and proof against it.

An hour later he finished his negative tirade. He looked out at what seemed to be the smoldering ashes of the Russian people’s faith. “Are there any questions?”, Bukharin demanded. Deafening silence filled the large auditorium but then one man approached the platform and mounted the lectern standing near the communist leader. He surveyed the vast crowd, first to the left and then to the right. Finally, he shouted the ancient greeting known well in the Russian Orthodox Church: “CHRIST IS RISEN!” En masse, the crowd arose as one and the response came crashing like a reverberated sound of thunder: “HE IS RISEN INDEED!” Needless to say, Bukharin was furious and left the crowd voicing their faith with joyful enthusiasm in the Resurrection.

The Easter story is about the risen Lord who calls us by name, who has the words of eternal life, who walks on the road with us and opens our hearts to his Word. He sends us to feed, heal, forgive, love, pray, witness and baptise in His Name.

ALLELUIA is a Hebrew term that the Church never felt the need to translate. It connects us with our Hebrew heritage. It is the final word of the Book of 150 Psalms. Just as another Hebrew word, AMEN is the last word in the entire Bible. May our ALLELUIA-AMEN echo for millennia as our proclamation of Easter faith because its exuberant exclamation can never be silenced. Praying ALLELUIA now prepares us for the eternal echo of this unending hymn of the heavens.

*Fr. John Cullen*

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May you and your families be specially blessed during this Easter Season!

Wishing God’s love and peace to you all.

*Sr. Mary Monaghan CSN*



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Victoire Larmenier  
Foundress of the  
Sisters of Nazareth  
1827– 1878



## Love Your Neighbour

Recently I came across a story of a man who agreed to cross the Atlantic in a boat with his friend, an experienced sailor. Along the way, the traveller could see an oncoming storm and wondered how his sailor friend would deal with it. Somehow he managed to sail, not through, but around the storm. When the seas had calmed down our traveller asked his friend how he could 'read' the seas. The seasoned sailor said: *"If the seas are calm, then you know there will be rough seas ahead; if the seas are rough, then you know there will be calm waters ahead. But either way, it all depends on your boat."*

There's a lot of wisdom in that story. In life, when things are going along nicely, we know very well that it's not always going to be like that. And when things are at their worst, we know in our heart of hearts that things will eventually get better. But it's the boat that matters!

For the Christian, the boat is surely our faith in God. When life is fine, we thank God – if we remember. But it's when things are not fine, we tend to ask, "Where is God?", "Does God love me?", "when and how will God see me through this?"

We live our lives in relationship with God, for better or for worse, but in practice that means how we live our relationships with the people around us. *"After all, those who don't love their brothers or sisters whom they have seen can hardly love God whom they have not seen!"* (1 John 4:20)

It's a good idea to stop and think who our neighbours are. It might be a spouse, siblings, or members of our immediate community. It will be the people we meet every day. And we are commanded – not invited – to love them. Not just in our minds, but really in thought and action, and it's not always easy.

In 2016, Pope Francis wrote *Amoris Laetitia*, 'The Joy of Love'. It was written primarily for married couples but can be useful for all of us. In it Pope Francis offered some tips and reminders. Every now and again we could give ourselves a test on them. Try it!

- Make time for one another, even if you're busy.
- Accept your partner's (other's) shortcomings.
- When you argue, acknowledge your partner's (other's) perspective.
- Don't hold grudges.
- Trust is the key.
- Never go to bed angry.
- Think thoughts, read books – Be interesting!
- Sometimes, just listen.
- Be generous with their imperfections.
- Try to help your partner (other) feel beautiful or loveable, even when it's hard.
- Say please, thank you and sorry.
- Love takes work.
- When you have to disagree, don't be hurtful.

How did you go? I find these tips helpful and good practical reminders that loving my neighbour isn't just a nice vague ideal of believing in it and do my best, but a command that requires real and practical action. And I can only do it if I believe that God loves me unconditionally and He will be beside me as I show my love for Him in loving the people around me.

I can imagine Pope Francis himself trying each day to love those around him in the Vatican, not to mention all the other people with whom he comes in contact! After all, that's how Christians should be recognised - how they love one another. Do we really? Do I really?

*A Friend of Nazareth*

## My Vocation Story

I was the youngest child of four children in my family. The eldest was a girl and the next two were boys. Our mother did not work outside our home but did plenty of work in the house and looking after us, always at our beck and call. Over the years both parents, especially our mother, with our Father's support, worked for a number of voluntary organisations mainly within the Catholic Church and especially in our Parish and for the schools we attended. We certainly had plenty of good example to follow from our parents, both in being faithful to our Catholic faith and in helping others in need.



*Sr. Clare Angela*

We all attended Catholic Schools, so Catholicism was planted very deep in us. In our immediate and extended family, in our Parish and among our friends, there were quite a number of Religious vocations over many years. This meant the idea of Religious vocation was certainly quite familiar to us. At school, the Sisters and visiting Bishops and Priests had frequently asked the class, "Hands up those who are going to be nuns?" I do not remember if my hand went up but I suspect it did!

When I reached the right age my mother wanted me to apply to be a nurse and my father thought the best job for me would be working in a bank. I had another idea. As from quite an early age I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. I have no idea where my choice came from but it was firmly rooted in my mind and I followed this path and studied at the Kindergarten Training College for three years after I left school. After working for two years in my hometown, Brisbane, a school friend, who was a nurse, moved to another city to do her midwifery training. I thought this sounded like a good idea so I uprooted myself from home and obtained a position for a year in Kindergarten in the same city as my friend. Yes, I was enjoying my time with my nurse friend and the other girls who were doing midwifery with her. We did not go wild but did the usual things 'good' girls were doing in 1965. I had bought a small car to get to work so we could go places and do things. I was free at weekends and there were always one or two of the nurses not on duty, so we were able to enjoy ourselves. We were free!

It was during this year that I became a little unsettled and dissatisfied with my life. I felt I wanted to do more for others and perhaps God was calling me. I found I was going to Mass more frequently and using some spare time to pray and think about God and what life was all about. I sought the advice of a Priest in the local church. He said I should think about Religious Life. I told him about the Sisters of Nazareth in Brisbane. All I knew about them was they cared for children and elderly people. My father knew them through his workplace and the Sisters used to go collecting, and once a year called at our house where my mother gave them morning tea.

Before I left Brisbane, as a member of the Young Christian Workers, I was asked to drive some people from our Parish to Nazareth House as they were giving the Nazareth children a picnic. I was impressed by the Sisters on this day.

By coincidence, the priest knew the Sisters of Nazareth well. He was a Dominican Chaplain priest there, and they are still are Chaplains for Nazareth House, Camberwell. He suggested I contact them. After some thought I decided to do this and was wondering about where and who I should contact. This was before the time of email or websites!

One day we were having coffee in the nurse's home and one of the girls made the announcement that she was shortly going to enter the Sisters of Nazareth in Melbourne. She had a copy of the Ballarat magazine, *The Light*, and there was the address of the Regional Office and Novitiate of the Sisters of Nazareth. It was easy for me to see where God was leading me! I wrote to them and in the return letter I received an invitation to visit them. As the saying goes, 'The rest is history'.

It has now been fifty-seven years since I entered the Sisters of Nazareth. Firstly, I owe so much to my parents for their example and upbringing, and secondly, to the many Sisters of Nazareth who have been such wonderful friends and examples of great Religious who have helped and guided me to keep on the path I stepped onto on 11 February, 1966. May God Bless each one of them.

*Sr. Clare Angela CSN*

## VOCATION: NO - NO - NO - OKAY

When we hear the word vocation, what do we usually think of? I usually think it is spoken of by way of a call to serve in some way. It is not usually used in referring to a megalomaniac who wants more and more \$\$\$ for their own and to hell with anyone else - 'Greed is Good' is a term that comes to mind.

To serve another, to make the world a better place, wherever you are, in whatever small way you can, ... be a good, generous parent, child, teacher, medical person or in some way to help others in their journey through life. Sometimes the choice seems to just come along and fall into place but other times the feeling or 'call' to change direction and do something else is not made with ease.



*Fr. Brenton Taylor*

Everyone's story would be different, but then again will have a common ingredient, that being, in my case, I thought I heard a 'distant call,' but I wouldn't believe. I didn't want to hear that strange call. "No thank you heaven" for the opportunity. My call was to stop what I was doing and go to a seminary – NO WAY!!!

I was in my late twenties and engaged in the world of media - not a Catholic - not Religious - a happy little hedonist. No way could I see myself a priest, but as time passed I just did not want to be doing what I was doing. I never thought I would be writing out my resignation, but I did. I still could not in any way go to a seminary, so I went to work on a farm for three years. Loved it! No Armani suits! Just stubbies and shirts from *Cheap and Cheerful*. But, one can run, but not hide. Heaven would not let me go.

I kept in touch with the local priest, and to cut a long story short, I went to the seminary ... not really thinking I would be ordained, but went. There was a wide range of men at the seminary and we all stumbled along through seven years of training - many leaving, some staying. Mid time, I pulled out and took six months away. I did think it was not for me. But once again heaven seemed to have other plans.

I had a chat with a priest involved with vocations in the church, about coming back and continuing my studies, but he told me, "No, don't bother", because I was not the type he wanted. As chance would have it, a more open-minded bishop heard of my situation and welcomed me under his wing to continue my studies for ordination in 1990.

## NO - NO - NO - OKAY Continued.



*Fr. Brenton saying mass*

Just as a side story... the priest who told me to “get lost” later climbed the clergy ladder to become my Bishop. Isn’t life interesting!

Vocation... how can you tell? Remain open to the call of a distant drum – look at how your life is now. Are you really achieving anything meaningful... If not, be open to a change.

At risk of sounding pious – have a prayer life. I didn’t previously, but that came along, although my prayer time with the best friend you will ever have, Jesus, was/is more like a rugby tackle than a quiet time.

### **VOCATION:**

- Be open to change
- Trust heaven – and make contact every day
- Trust me, you won’t be sorry
- Don’t be afraid
- Step out in faith

*Fr. Brenton Taylor*

## So What is a Vocation?

It is a particular calling or strong impulse or inclination to follow a particular occupation, profession, calling or career. It could be a call to give one’s life to God and to His people or to the vocation of marriage.

In this Newsletter we look at ways to live our lives following God’s call on our journey. Yes I believe God calls each one of us to follow the journey that is best for us. However like a best friend calling us to follow, we can say ‘no.’ No true friendship is forced. However for me, if I loved someone very much I would not want to disappoint them.

The only real journey story I know is my own, so here it is... I left school in 1953, and three years later I was really enjoying my life. I had a job, had joined a basketball team, indoor sports team, drama club and went to all the weekend dances that were on in the district.

However, I felt my time was a gap filler as I wasn’t really fulfilled. I felt empty. All the time I was enjoying myself. Meeting many young men and dreaming of having a family and a home of my own, while God seemed to be tugging at my heartstrings. The more I enjoyed myself the more He seemed to be pulling me away. At that stage I decided I would have to try my vocation as a Sister. I realised the formation time was a discernment time so I could go home if it wasn’t for me. This year I will be 65 years professed, so the rest is history.

In 1953 there were very few choices for young people but today the world is your oyster!

- So...
- Pray
  - Look at your gifts, interests and what brings you fulfilment
  - Speak to a director or a person suitable to guide you

Today we do have the opportunity to have time with a priest, brother or Religious Order to know a little about what our future could be like.

For marriage there are pre-marriage courses available.

Enjoy the few articles in this newsletter. They may help.

*Sr. Rosalie O’Malley*

## Vocations Can Be Surprisingly Varied

Vocations can be surprisingly varied. Had I known at the outset where mine would lead, I think I might have died with fright, or at least been paralysed with fear. Life's experiences have turned me upside down and inside out.

In my adolescence, I became a Catholic and fell in love with God.

By age 15, I had it all worked out. I'd become a nun, but definitely not a teacher. A hidden life of simplicity and service beckoned, caring for the needy and unloved.

Travel? No thanks! I felt more drawn to staying put in life. The Lord smiled gently as I charted my course. He had other ideas. I assure you, He has a great sense of humour!

I entered the convent at 17 and God began His work. My ideas weren't His ideas and I needed to let go of much. This is still a work in progress. Despite having no interest in travel, soon after my profession BANG - I found myself leaving the UK for Australia. Stability, another of my preferences, but BANG - in 22 years of religious life, I moved 17 times. Teaching? No way! But... yes... I was enrolled in a Teacher's Training College.

During my years as an 'active' religious, there was a persistent attraction to the 'contemplative' life. After 15 years I took the plunge and relocated to a Carmelite group which had recently been founded by a Carmelite nun from New South Wales.

We prayed the full Divine Office daily but were not enclosed. People were invited to spend time in retreat, joining in the prayer times and eating with the Community. We lived on alms.

I spent 7 years with this group and am very grateful for all I learnt which built upon the foundation laid as an active sister. Then another challenge loomed. Owing to dwindling membership the painful decision was made to disband. What was the Lord doing? There I was, 'up the creek without a paddle!'

However, the Lord was right there in the trauma. He seemed to be saying "Courage. I've been preparing you over the past 22 years – go now, with confidence and share your treasure with the world."

It was tough, starting again at 40, but the years have been so blessed. Before leaving New Zealand, I was received at Christchurch Cathedral as a 'Consecrated Virgin' which gave a special blessing to my 'lay' life.

Since then, so much has happened. Sadly, 500 words are vastly inadequate to share it. I'd need to write a book! Suffice it to say, we all have a calling - go for it! Wherever it may lead you, give it your best shot and see what God will do.



*Kathleen Mitson*



*Cover picture*

*Sister Mi No, Sister Tauta'alefili, Sister Anh on their First Profession.*

*Kathleen Mitson*

## It was Time for Me to Leave My Boat Behind!

I was born and grew up in a small village in the centre of Vietnam. Like other peers, I loved to have fun, go to parties and hang out with my friends. I had no consciousness or ever dreamt of becoming a sister until when I was a sophomore in university, training to be a teacher - I felt something stirring within me. Gathering with friends no longer attracted me; instead I loved to be in Church and spend time in prayer something that had never interested me too much before. As time went by there was an inner voice which became stronger and stronger, day by day, and one day I decided to talk to my parents and tell them I wanted to be a sister. They were really shocked because they could see how passionate I was about teaching. They never expected me to choose this state of life. Eventually with their blessing and support I was able to 'leave my *boat* behind'.



*Sr. Anh Thi Nguyen*

Choosing a Religious Order to enter then became my big challenge. Everything was in God's plan and in 2018, in the 'destined flight,' I met Sister Teresa Clare who had come to Vietnam for a visit. We were on the same flight, and I found myself sitting behind Sister, watching her but said nothing until the plane landed. As we disembarked, I lost sight of her and felt I had missed an important opportunity. Thankfully, and to my joy, we met each other again at the luggage collection point. This time I plucked up the courage to approach her. Then I was 'hooked'.

After 9 months of discernment, I was accepted to enter and become an aspirant. One year later I commenced the Candidacy program of the Sisters of Nazareth in Australia. When I first set foot in the English-speaking country language was one of my first challenges, followed by culture shock. Chopsticks and spoon that we use daily at home had to be replaced by a knife and fork. I used to keep some cutlery in my room to practise how to use them in those days. Furthermore, coping with the Covid 19 pandemic, the upset at being unable to visit my family before going to London was a great challenge.

God is good, all the time. A year later I was accepted to be become a Novice and enter the international Novitiate of the Sisters of Nazareth at The Mother House in Hammersmith, London.

I will never forget the Reception Day on 24 May 2021. There were five candidates being received as Novices. We wished to be five decades of the Rosary! I still remember vividly when Sister Brenda asked which mystery we would like to be; joyful, sorrowful, luminous or the glorious mystery, we all responded equally "all of them". It seemed like yesterday that we just received our religious names. Time flies! The 2 years of Novitiate were a privilege for me where I have deepened my love for God desiring to follow Him more closely.

I had the opportunities to learn and to live the legacy of our Bonne Mere, *Victoire Larmenier*, Foundress and Servant of God, with her deep love of God and her desire to serve people in need. Her legacy is alive and active within the Nazareth communities that I have experienced. I am so honoured and blessed to follow in her footsteps.

Now I am excited and looking forward to my First Profession day which will be on Divine Mercy Sunday, 16 April 2023. It will be a very special day for me as I profess my vows of chastity, poverty and obedience to the Lord, committing myself totally and wholeheartedly to the service of God.

*Sr. Anh Thi Nguyen CSN*

## God's Plan, Not My Plan

My name is Sister Mi No Thi. I came from the centre of Vietnam. I grew up in small Catholic village. I enjoyed life and having fun with my friends, but felt unfulfilled. God had a different plan for me. One that would be fulfilling. I had been grappling with the meaning of my life and wanting to give more but not really being sure how to go about this. I believed this to be a sign from God and the start of my discerning Religious Life. Only when I spent time in prayer with God did I feel at peace. Like many young people, I did not know how to go about discerning a vocation.



*Sr. Mi No Thi*

“Should I be a Sister?” or “Should I be married?” This question played around in my head during my last year of college. I knew the importance of prayer when discerning, so I attended a 5-day retreat for students asking one question during each day. “Show me the way God, and please help your child!” I believed the Spirit would guide me. God answered my prayer and I entered the convent of the Sisters of Nazareth.

I have almost completed my Novitiate and will be professed on 16 April, 2023. Thanks be to God! I am excited about the journey ahead as I live the vowed life.

During my time as a Novice I had the opportunity to understand and learn more about prayer, community life and apostolic life. I understand the vowed life, the meaning of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the consecrated life. I sincerely appreciate the Sisters who have guided and supported me with their wisdom and love over the past years. Their living of the Gospel values gives great example and a true witness for Christ.

In addition, I am most grateful to God who called me and allowed me to serve Him as I live this precious vocation. I do not know where the future will take me, but I know that I will love Him until the end of my life and I am sure that He loves me. A few weeks ago when I called my mother, I asked her to tell me about my Baptism. She told me that before my Baptism, she went to a lady who had strong faith, asking her to be my Godmother. The lady asked my mother some questions! One of them was, “Would you be happy for your daughter to be a Sister? My mother answered “Yes” and so she became my Godmother. I became a Christian. On hearing this it struck me - I realised that I did not choose God, but He chose me first.

In conclusion, my faith tells me we are all loved by God. Long before God created the world, He already knew me. He has carved me on the palm of His hand. My past helped and influenced me to grow into who I am today. Please pray for me.

## My Special Day Draws Near!

The end of any achievement can set the stage for the start of new beginnings for the future. As I journey towards the end of my Novitiate, I give thanks to God for the many graces and blessings that He has bestowed on me throughout my vocation journey. I am so deeply grateful.

I believe that the Lord has called me to be a Sister of Nazareth and I have responded to this call with all of my heart. My desire to serve Him, giving my whole heart and soul to Him, is about to come as I profess my First Vows on 16 April, 2023. The day I have been praying and preparing for is at hand as I commit my vows to God and to the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth. It is a mighty step and wonderful commitment.



*Sr. Tauta'alefili*

*Pictures from the First Vows ceremony of Sisters Irene Lucy, Paulina, Tauta'alefili, Mi No Thi and Anh Thi.*



*We five Sisters would like to thank our Formators and all those who have walked with us on our journey to this very special day. We would especially like to thank our families and those who have carried us in prayer.*



*Our five newly professed Sisters and their Formators:  
From left, Sisters Bongani (Formator), Irene, Mi No, Paulina, Anh Thi, Tauta'alefili, Bernadette (Formator)*

## *My Excitement at Profession*

I was born and raised in a staunch Catholic family in Kenya. I had a desire of serving God as a Religious Sister from my childhood. I believe I am where God is calling me to be as I fulfil my desire, responding to His call and professing my first vows as a Sister of Nazareth on 16 April 2023. My heart is filled with joy and excitement as I look forward to professing the three vows - the Evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. May the Lord enrich me in my poverty. May the Lord love me in my chastity. May the Lord embolden me in my obedience.



*Sr. Irene Lucy*

## *I Responded to He Who Loved Me*

I am almost at the end of my Novitiate and preparing to take my first vows as a Sister of Nazareth. My Novitiate has been a very important time for discernment and building a firm foundation on which to base my life as a Sister of Nazareth. The experience is just like a bride waiting for her wedding; my prayers and thoughts are full of what the Lord is calling me to. Throughout my time as an Novice, the Lord has opened my vision filling me with His grace, reminding me nothing is impossible. In Him I place all my trust.



*Sr. Paulina*

There is something special about taking the step to leave the materialism of the world and the worldly values, and to give one's heart to God and God alone, while living in the world. It was so freeing, and filled me with love peace and a deep sense of contentment. I responded to He Who loved me in a radical way and gifted me with this calling to Religious Life. Of course, life is not without its challenges; these challenges help me to grow and deepen my love for my Lord. On the day of my profession April 16, I will say my 'YES' to the Lord. The one who holds my life in His hands. I am excited and filled with love and joy!

## An Accidental Vocation?

Thanks be to God! I was about 16 when I made a hasty decision to pack my overnight bag and went to visit my grandmother after I received news that my uncle was thinking of sending her to the old people's place, owned by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Granny's health started to decline, as well as her eyesight and her mental resilience.

My overnight stay extended to being permanent, and from there, I continued with my secondary school at the Methodist College. That side of the family were staunch Catholics, while I considered myself a proper Protestant who had little commonality with Catholicism.



*Sr. Elizapeta*

My uncle and his family occupied the main house and he was known for his strict Catholic upbringing. Evening prayers were a challenge. I had to sit through an hour with the family whilst they were praying the Rosary and another long prayer, which later I learned was a litany. Every action during evening prayers was hard to fathom; vocal prayers were repetitive; most were facing the statue of Mary and others - the crucifix. "These people have really lost it," I told myself. It was a point of conversation with friends at school as we regarded Catholics, including my family, strange people. They kept going down on their knees, up and down the whole-time during their service. There was hardly a moment to pray silently.

A break came through when I joined the choir that practised every evening at 7:30pm for the Sunday Masses. Christmas Vigil Mass was a massive event that year, as carloads of people and buses came from villages nearby. The people congregated in St. Teresa's Hall where the Mass was celebrated by Fr. Lui Tevaga, Parish Priest at the time. So our choir, made up of at least 70 people was considered the best one to sing the Vigil.

I had not made any decision to become a Catholic; I was happy just to sing with the choir. During Communion time I joined the lines of people going up for Holy Communion. Since nobody explained to me what to do, I extended my hand and took the Host and walked away. The conductor gave the signal that we were about to sing the Communion hymn. To free my hand for the hymn sheet I passed on the host to the person next to me. Immediately, I got the attention of everyone in the choir and my story made headlines instantly. It was fast-tracked and it beat me home before I even arrived! It is the reason now that I am very pedantic as a Eucharistic Minister to ensure people receive Holy Communion in front of me, and caution anyone who walks away with the host! The incident was a turning point in my life and I decided to receive instructions so as to be able to receive Holy Communion. I made my first Holy Communion the following year after receiving instruction in the Faith.

After a couple of years with Fr. Lui's youth, I decided to explore the idea of becoming a nun. My application letter was sent to two congregations in Australia. I told myself that the congregation that responded to me first, was the one. The rest is history! In the waiting phase, I confided to a Priest and a visiting Nun of my decision to join a Religious Congregation. They talked me out of this idea on separate occasions. They suggested that I should go and experiment with the world and then think about it again. It was a valid point, however Fr. Lui did not share the same opinion. I paid credit to Fr. Lui, who was my mentor, and I regarded him as my Spiritual Director. His discipline helped to shape and prepare me for what was ahead of me. Independently, without consulting my parents or anyone else, I decided to join up or forget about the whole thing. I considered myself to be self-motivated, able to complete tasks, and to have high expectations.

On reflection, my journey as a Sister of Nazareth has been a blessing. I have always been inspired by our foundress Victoire Larmenier's charism - of her unwavering faith in God, her courage and acceptance of the Cross and her unconditional love for everyone. There is also the respect and appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament, the fighting force behind everything I do. This overwhelming sense of gratitude and appreciation when receiving Jesus in Holy Communion during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and daily encounters with Jesus is a fuel and energy that keeps me going.

I am extremely grateful for my upbringing and my loving relationship with my own father. The freedom I experienced as a teenager enable me to talk and think of God on the same level. It is my constant reminder that I am a beloved daughter of God despite my many flaws and failings. "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of Sacramental Life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." These wonderful words of Pope Francis speak volumes to me.

Conceptualisation is about seeing the big picture, but when I had set my heart to join the convent, I did not have a clue what God had in store for me. God has gifted me with my vocation. The tapestry of my life has been woven into a pathway that mixed with the blessings, also many challenges, misunderstandings and hiccups of Religious Life. I live my life each day, reminding myself that I am loved and beloved by God. I have been called to offer my gifts to serve God and others. A person with shortcomings and flaws "on whom the Lord has turned his gaze" (*Pope Francis*).

It is good to be here, and God's love for me is more than enough.

*Sr. Elizapeta CSN*



*Sr. Pauline (far right) welcomes Srs Tauta'alefili, Mi No Thi and Anh Thi back to Australia.*

## 30 years of Marriage

They say time flies when you're having fun – I could not agree more when it comes to our marriage. It seems that in a blink of an eye my wife and I are celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary this year. It's been an amazing journey and it's gone way too fast.

We first met while working for the same company in our early twenties. We were just friends for six months, going out with workmates and mixing in similar social circles. Despite our friendship, I knew the moment we met I wanted to spend the rest of my life with this amazing young lady. So with some encouragement from a workmate I finally plucked up the courage to ask her out – and so it began. Being friends first, before starting out together certainly made a difference. It provided a solid base to build our relationship. My wife is still my best friend and soul-mate. That will never change.

From the beginning, trust and communication have always been two of the main ingredients of our relationship. Not long after we were married, my wife started her current career as a flight attendant and trainer for our New Zealand national airline. She was away from home a lot. I also had just left my job to start a business so we were both very busy in our independent roles. Despite an often hectic lifestyle, we always have and still do make a point to reconnect and discuss things when we get together, and always iron out any issues straight away when things are challenging at work or at home.

Personal independence is also very important in our marriage. Although we have always been the 'complete package' socially and on our own, we do not live in each other pockets nor dictate friendships or personal space. One must respect each other in this regard, as it helps each other grow and keep connected over the years. Giving each other space also means we always look forward to reconnecting. It's great that after 30 years we can still sit in a restaurant and talk all night about our day or what's been going on. Conversation and laughter always flow – it's one of the things I love about our marriage. A sense of humour is also a must in our case! Laughter is the best medicine.

When it comes to running the household we share the workload and fill in the spaces where needed. My wife does most of the housework duties and I do most of the cooking/baking, although this is reversed depending on our work/business commitments at the time. We have lived on a lifestyle block with extensive gardens for 20 years, so we also share these duties. The garden can be challenging but so long as you keep on top of things they don't get away on you. My tonic is the vegetable garden – the water blaster and the leaf blower is hers!

We have been blessed with two children – a son, Liam and a daughter, Elina – who are both in their late teens. Our parenting style is very much a united front and we have a very direct, honest and open approach with our kids. This has been helpful with modern day pressures such as cell phones and social media. Our kids have never succeeded in 'playing us off against each other' as they know it is pointless. We always have each other's back when parenting and if we do disagree on how each other has handled a situation, we discuss it afterwards and reassess – as a rule, not in front of the kids.



*Nancy and Michael  
Wagteveld*



*Nancy and Michael today.*

My wife and I have the utmost respect and love for each other, even though with our sense of humour we may not always portray this to people who do not know us very well! We live our lives together as one, while respecting each other's individuality. As in any marriage it is not all plain sailing. There are always going to be challenges or low points, but with love, mutual respect, trust and patience, the journey of marriage is a pleasure, and it certainly has been for me.

*Michael Wagteveld*



*Liam and Elina*

## Together for 72 years

Returning from the war in Papua New Guinea and Borneo 1940, Lorrie Hannett began shearing to save up to buy a small farm in Greens Creek. It was there that he met the love of his life, Norma Bibby. Yes, in the shearing shed in 1948 Lorrie was shearing while Norma was providing the meals. Providing shearer's meals is an exacting job so Norma must have made an impression on Lorrie. On the 17 November, 1951 they were married in their beloved little Anglican church in Navarre. Because of a shortage of funds they built the little Church as money became available. First the foundations and the walls. Then when funds were available, the roof and the floor. At that stage it was in use, slowly progressing to its completion.



*Norma and Lorrie*

Lorrie tells us it was the inspiration and love of his life to be married to Norma. They settled on their small farm, staying there all of their 72 years.

*Never too old to have fun!*

Lorrie and Norma had two children, Sandra and Gary. When it was time for them to go to school, and the nearest was 6 miles away, they decided to build a home in Navarre so the children could walk to school. At that time there was no such thing as jumping in the car or getting a bus. Lorrie bought a ute for work so was able to drive to the farm.

It was a 25 mile drive to do the shopping, so there was no just running over to get what one had forgotten. They also visited the Doctor and Dentist at the same time. The government made channels for the water so the farmers would have water for their farms. They had tanks for the rain water, and for the animals and gardens. Lorrie would borrow the tractor from his brother. He planted fruit trees in the orchard and lots of vegetables in the garden. They had their own hens for eggs, cows for milk and cream, and sheep for meat, so were really self-sufficient. Naturally, Norma bottled the extra fruit, made jam, preserved the extra eggs and salted the beans so they were well stocked for the winter.

Sport was important to the country people; it was also where the beer was sold as there were no pubs in town, and that is where everyone gathered; it was the hub of the town. It was nearly as important as their beloved Collingwood!

Lorrie was in the shearing shed, when at 96, he fell. He told his mates he was ok, so got up and drove home to Norma. He decided he'd better go to the hospital and it was there he discovered he had a fractured hip, but that was no trouble for him. He had it operated on and was back at the farm in no time. Today Lorrie is 102, and Norma is 95.

*What is the answer to a life well lived?*

*In love to the end after nearly 73 years together. A life to be proud of.*

*Work hard, share interests, work together, have good country food and live your faith.*

*The Church was often where the country people gathered on Sundays.*

## The Call of St. Francis

An event which changed the life of St. Francis and has influenced the way in which Franciscans have lived their lives, was his encounter with the embrace of a leper. Lepers were despised and isolated. Like most people of his day, the very thought of lepers filled Francis with great fear and loathing. His embrace of the leper in many ways set the tone for the rest of his life and mission, as well as for the lives and mission of his followers.



*Br. Michael*

As religious, we experience our own encounter with the ‘leper’ – often in the disguise of some person or some event. After this encounter, we come to see more clearly God’s purpose for our lives. The person of Christ becomes visible and we feel moved to minister, to engage with the other. This experience of an ‘encounter’ is not limited to religious alone. Often young people experience such an event in their lives and some begin to think about joining others who share their vision of responding to Christ’s invitation to “come follow me.” An invitation that will give life and the promise of life to the full.

Some people come to religious life because they are attracted by a simple way of life or because a particular work is done. Others are attracted because they hope to find their own growth, but they gradually discover that there is more to religious life than that. To remain faithful to it means accepting certain disciplines, structure and making the daily effort to come out of the shell of egoism. Then they discover that living in community is not just a way of life only but a response to a call from God to carry others in their suffering and growth towards liberation, and to be responsible for them. Jean Vanier wrote “People enter community to be happy. They stay to make others happy.”

Society today often stresses the importance of the individual, their rights and their importance. All else is second to the individual. In the light of this, many think what religious do and how they do it is outdated and irrelevant. In light of Christ, the cross, and the Gospel, what religious do and represent is valued and important. For the religious they are pursuing something which gives life and gives it to the full. The religious learns to trust. Trusting God and his providence, trusting Him present in their superiors and trust in Him present in the people they serve.

Commitment in a religious community is not like joining a social group. A religious community is something quite different. It is the recognition by its members that they have been called by God to live together, love each other, pray and work together in response to the cry of the poor of the distressing person of the ‘leper.’ For the religious, everything starts with the recognition that they are made to be together. Still individuals, but living together, sharing the same vision, responding to the same call. A religious community is never there for itself, it belongs to something greater – to the poor, the leper, to humanity, to the church, to the world. It is a gift which is offered to all people.

Hidden in the poverty, in the wounds of the lepers of our world today, is the mystery of the presence of God. In their anguish and destitution, their pain and insecurity, the religious provides a presence and a heart which says “Take heart, you are important in my eyes and I love you. You have value. There is hope.” The religious provides a presence which reveals God’s mercy. The mercy of a Father who loves and gives life.

*Br. Michael OFM Cap*