

UNDER^{the} SOUTHERN CROSS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH - HOLY SPIRIT PROVINCE IN AUSTRALIA | NO 21/ OCT 2018

ONE YEAR LIKE ONE DAY



Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

Last year I wrote to you about my '*Camino*' – the pilgrimage and ways I hope to walk in this Leadership role for the next few years. Ever since then, I have been given

the opportunity to undertake many ways of travelling – both physically and spiritually – throughout Australia and overseas.

During these travels, I have experienced richness of encounters with our Sisters and other people. One significant experience in one of these places was the 'fast way' of our life. It is hard to believe that another year has almost ended, and we will soon be welcoming in the year 2019. On the other hand, we are one year closer to heaven!

In this issue of 'Under the Southern Cross' we would like to share some 'past' news with you all – the activities and stories which we share

regularly throughout the year via our Facebook page (Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth – Australia) and our website (csfn.org.au)

You will enjoy articles written by our Sisters, friends and associates that focus on our daily ministries and stories shared 'as they happened' – you can also read the article in its entirety on our online platforms. We invite you to revisit them by viewing the images taken and shared. We hope that this 'Annual Printed Copy' will create an opportunity for you to see at a glance what has been happening during the past 12 months – both the ordinary and extraordinary days of our lives.

Naturally, the printed publication cannot cover all the activities of our province – or fit them all in! We hope that those of you who have access to our online platforms, will keep updated that way.

BY SR LUCYNA FRACZEK

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A GLIMPSE OF HOPE - LET THE SPIRIT LEAD!

There is no doubt that the Church in Australia is not in the best condition. The institutional Church is losing its credibility in many ways yet at the same time the Church is the community of those who, with more or less enthusiasm, create it week by week when encountering Christ through their participation in the Church's sacramental life.

In this context and among the many colours and shades of Catholic Australians, the ACBC (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference) decided to bring the Church in Australia on a very special journey. The Catholic Church of Australia plans to host a Plenary Council in 2020. This was announced by the Archbishop of Brisbane, Mark Coleridge.

This would be the fifth major assembly for the Catholic Church of Australia and would take place more than eighty years since the last synod, which was celebrated in 1937.

19/20 October 2017 marked the first meeting of the Bishops Committee, Executive Committee (which I am privileged to be a part of) and the Facilitation Team. Two days were filled with getting to know each other, learning and understanding our roles, trying to understand the difference between being on a journey and wandering with no direction. It was a time of reflection, prayer and a lot of active listening.

Many sticky notes and butcher paper was used to record

big ideas and small details to ensure that every possible way of engaging one and all in the Australian church will be included in the preparation, celebration and implementation of the Synod.

Over the past year the journey continued into an active Listening and Dialogue in which many people connected and disconnected with the church in many ways. Together and individually we answered the question: What God wants of us in Australia at this time?

Our hearts and heads are open for hope; our thoughts and concerns are grounded in reality.

With the vague but clear and only direction to "follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit" we started the journey – our direction and destination is only known to God. Watch this space!

BY SR GRACE ROCLAWSKA

Kościół w Australii przygotowuje się do Synodu Powszechnego. Ostatni Synod odbył się w 1937 roku. Nasze zgromadzenie reprezentowane jest w Komitecie koordynującym te przygotowania.



EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT - GO!

The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Holy Spirit Province got together in Baulkham Hills for the Annual Province meeting on 10 - 13 of November. Some of the Sisters share their experiences:

SR LUCYNA: It is so good to be back together with all our Sisters from different communities and share the story of what had happened for the last few months in our lives, in our ministries and the people we meet on our way... Personally, for me, the most significant time was Saturday afternoon the vocational/youth workshop. It was an amazing experience to see each local community gathered in different "corners" of our venue to make a plan for activities for the Year of Youth 2018. The fire of the Holy Spirit was burning in our hearts when we talked and discussed what can be done.

SR IRENE: What I enjoyed the most was being among my beautiful Sisters, sharing our stories and work. I appreciated how we all worked together to make our 3 days prayerful, respectful, comfortable and fun loving.

SR GRACE: I love the time of celebrating the Eucharist together. The most significant for me was the closing Eucharist in which we renewed our vows.

SR LOIS ANN: Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green was a sheer delight! His words spoken straight from the heart resonated through me. I wondered why they sounded so familiar. On reflection I realise that Bishop Columba has a heart for mission – a 'Nazareth heart' just like our foundress, Bl. Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd who said, "... and this is the way I envision the life of our Nazareth: a life of LOVE ...

SR JEAN: I experienced our uniqueness as a Province in our Congregation. Our varied countries of origin, cultures and life experiences challenges me to be open, understanding and appreciative of the beauty of one another.

FOR FULL STORY GO TO: csfn.org.au



GO, SET THE WORLD ON FIRE



At the beginning of this year I attended the Summer School of Evangelization in Bathurst organized by the Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community and the Brothers and Sisters of the Missionaries of God's Love. The joy of being with 200 young people enriched my heart tremendously. Worship, prayer, music, drama, listening to testimonies, sharing stories and above all God's love *"set my heart on fire"* to do more and more in the field of Evangelisation wherever I go. I participated in the lecture with Father Ken Barker MGL, titled *"Go, set the World on fire"*. During the lecture we were invited to ask ourselves about our identity and motivation of evangelization. After reflecting about our personal experience of God's love and mercy we realized that sharing the Good News could help others find God in their lives because we want them to experience what we have experienced. Another area that touched me was the influence that we have on other's faith journey. (...) When someone comes and wants to believe how we believe, we can accompany them on their faith journey by walking, listening and sharing our life with them in love. When we give our life to others they blossom. What is more, we should not wait to be perfect to start evangelisation, we should start now. The Holy Spirit gives us a courage to spread the Good News. The power comes from the cross of Jesus Christ and His Spirit. First we have to share the gospel, next pray for

healing and be ready to receive what God is giving to us. One day we reflected on adoption and being chosen. We watched a short story about an American couple who adopted children with a disability. The conclusion was that because the children were chosen they would never be abandon as God would never abandon his children. "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). God chose us with our weaknesses and strengths, and He will never abandon us because we are His children. Lastly, we can increase others faith by giving testimony to our own faith. I have experienced God's love by finding the meaning of my name in the light of the gospel Mt 3;13-17. I always translated my name as "I am dear to God". When one of the members of Disciples of Jesus extended his hands over me in prayer, he said that my name is Beloved to God. All my life God is gradually revealing to me the meaning of my name and His unconditional love. I pray that all might hear the Father's voice from heaven "You are my beloved..., with you I am well pleased".

BY SR BOGUMILA MALIKOWSKA

MY SSS GOD



Recently I have had some great opportunities to reflect on my life, and particularly on my image of God: who God has been, who God is for me now, and who I hope God will be. My reflection is very simple, but meaningful for me. My image of God is just three letters: SSS. And right now, you might be asking: what on earth does that mean?!

As a child, my image of God was as SOMEONE. I went to Mass regularly with my family and we prayed together, but I didn't have a strong personal relationship with God. There were, however, several important experiences which developed my image of God as someone there, present in my life. I remember, at the age of around seven or eight, attending Mass with my extended family at my grandparents' parish, which is a big church with an organ loft at the back. We were sitting in the organ loft, and from there we could see everything. The church has Latin phrases all around the ceiling, and I remember asking one of my uncles what the particular phrase in front of us meant. He told me it meant *It is I, do not be afraid*, which I now know is from the Gospel story of Jesus calming the storm. At the time, I remember thinking simply, "Wow!" My parents and extended family also helped me to develop my belief in God's presence, particularly through their prayer. I was born with Moebius Syndrome, which causes lifelong facial paralysis among other issues, and all my life have had particular health challenges. I have strong memories as a child of my family praying for me, and of my parents encouraging me to see my health condition as a way of being closer to God, who knew I could handle difficulties.

As I became a teenager, God suddenly became a STRANGER. Throughout my adolescence and into my early adulthood I struggled with depression and low self-esteem and sometimes made wrong choices. I did very little to deepen my faith or to connect with God. God became someone who had abandoned me, someone distant.

And now? God is simply a SEEKER. Within the last few years, I have had many rich experiences of God drawing me closer to Him.

Recently I was meditating on the Gospel passage in which Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven as a treasure in the field and as a fine pearl. I felt as I was meditating that God is that treasure and that fine pearl, and that I am meant to seek Him – and then all of a sudden I thought to myself, "Hey, I'm like that for God, too!" To God, I am a treasure in the field or a fine pearl, and He would sell everything to possess me. I am like that for God, and so are you. This image of God as seeking me, and as wanting me to seek Him too, fills me with deep gratitude and awe, and it is one I never want to forget.

At the end of my reflection on my Someone, Stranger, Seeker God, I believe that our image of God is closely connected with our image of ourselves. Coming to a more positive self-awareness has, I believed, helped me to see how much God loves me and how close He really is and wants to be to me. My prayer for you is that you also will experience, in your own unique way, God's loving presence in your life.

BY SR SOPHIE BOFFA

Sa ating patuoy na pananampalataya sa Dios, tayo ay kanyang hinuhubog sa katotohanan na sya ay puno ng pagmamahal sa atin at tayo ay mahalaga sa kanya.



ONE FAMILY IN CHRIST

The IX International Meeting of Families took place in Dublin, Ireland (25 –26 August 2018).

This international event brings together families from across the world to celebrate, pray and reflect upon the central importance of marriage and the family as the cornerstone of our lives, of the Church and of society. It is held every three years in different parts of the world. This time Ireland has been chosen by Pope Francis to host the World Meeting of Families from 21-26 August 2018. The event was guided by the theme “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World”.

The event had the following key moments: three days of the Pastoral Congress, a Festival of Families and a solemn Eucharistic Celebration. The World Meeting of Families focused on the key issues related to family drawn from Pope Francis’ teachings in The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia). During three days of the Congress there were a variety of keynote speakers from over the world, workshops and discussions; exhibitions, art and cultural activities, daily celebration of the Eucharist, liturgical and prayerful activities. Each day focused one theme: Wednesday- ‘The family and Faith’, Thursday- ‘The Family and Love’ and Friday- ‘The Family and Hope’. All the talks we participated, were very inspirational and it gave us some new insights about the life of family, value that matters and first showed us how beautiful and precious is a gift of family, our family. The Festival of Families, gathered people to celebrate the gift of family through a cultural celebration of music, dance, song, and stories and testimonies given by families from different parts of the world. The World Meeting of the Families concluded with a Solemn Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in thanksgiving to God for the gift of family. These five days in Dublin were such an enjoyable experience and we feel very enriched. The encounter with other participants and people we met on the streets made us rich and blessed. It was a great privilege to be a part of that wonderful and heart lifting up experience. It was not only another event, but it was a celebration of joy and building up our relationship with God through his Church, as Pope Francis said

during a festival of Families “It is good to celebrate, for celebration makes us more human and more Christian. It also helps us to share the joy of knowing that Jesus loves us, he accompanies us on our journey of life, and each day he draws us closer to himself. Today in Dublin we are gathered for a family celebration of thanksgiving to God for who we are: one family in Christ, spread throughout the world.” WMOF was the invitation to share a meal and faith with one big Family – the Church and those who are maybe in the beginning of their faith journey. The icon for WOMF mirrored this perfectly. It was a time to learn how to be a family in which we rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and weep with those who grieve or feel knocked down by life. A family in which we care for everyone. Pope Francis encouraged us and invite every family to be a beacon of the joy of God’s love in the world. We encourage you to visit WMOF’s website to read or even watch Pope Francis speeches www.worldmeeting2018.ie/en/ and to find out more about the event.

BY SRS MARGARET KOZUB AND RITA APURA



AS ONE FAMILY

30th December 2017 was unusual day! This afternoon a lot of people came to our convent. Someone asked: "Why, what's up in the convent?" People were different ages and different nationalities. They came, because they wanted to celebrate with us Solemnity of the Holy Family.

Every year we celebrate, but every celebration is special. This year we invited families, our friends and youth to enjoy with us our Feast Day. Our celebration started in the chapel. Fr Jose Manjaly celebrated Holy Mass in the intentions families. Together we said thank you to Jesus, Mary and Joseph for our family and asked the Holy Family to protect our family in daily life. After that we had break time for a cuppa, for sharing and for fun! We had a big cake, because it was our Solemnity. (A solemnity celebration isn't a true one without a cake!) We really express appreciation to Mrs Marietta Gomes for her nice cake. It was unbelievably delicious. Thank you so much for everybody for the sweets and presents given to us.

The second part of our celebration was in the chapel again. We had an Holy Hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We prayed in the intentions our Catholic Church, Pope Francis, priests, religious and families. Family is very important for whole our society. When we have a healthy family, consequently we have a healthy, more spiritual stronger people in society. They make our world more beautiful and we have a less problems. During our Adoration, we said together an act of consecration to the Holy Family. We finished the Adoration by saying together our daily prayer to the Holy Family:

"O Holy Family, bless and protect all the families of the world; safeguard their unity, fidelity, integrity and dignity. Enable them to live according to God's law that they may fulfil their sublime vocation. May their lives be a reflection of yours and may they enjoy your presence forever in heaven. Amen"

I would like to say from bottom my heart "Thank you so

much to everybody for coming, for praying together and for supporting us in our daily life".

BY SR PAULA VOLCHEK



CONTACT US

WANT TO CONTACT US MORE OFTEN?

We're only a click away!

www.csfn.org.au

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth is an international apostolic congregation founded in 1875. Sisters live and serve in 170 communities in 13 countries on 5 continents. The Generalate is located in Rome, Italy.

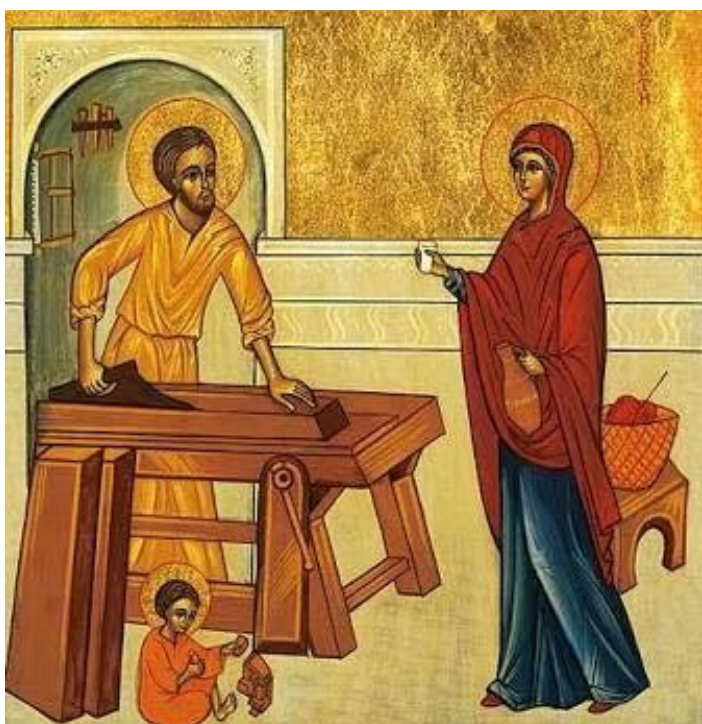
www.nazarethfamily.org

Check out our Facebook page for the Holy Spirit Province. We post regular updates on important news and events happening in our Province, in our Church, and in our world.

www.facebook.com/csfnaustralia



FAMILY FROM NAZARETH



In today's world, full of confusion, misunderstandings and the breakdown of family life, we desperately need a good model for life and to help us to fulfil our vocations of holiness. There is no doubt that the example of the Holy Family inspires us unceasingly and shows the important values that never change and that really matter. The Family from Nazareth is like a well of fresh water with an endless source. Any time we look at the Holy Family and reflect about their life we take a sip of freshness and a new understanding into our life. This unique family can help us to understand ourselves and see our life in a different light or from a different perspective. There is much we can learn from this simple, faithful and humble family from Nazareth. I would like to focus only on some things I've learnt anew when meditating upon the mystery of the Holy Family.

First of all, Jesus, Mary and Joseph show us that the family is a community of persons. They all were individuals with different and unique personalities. Each of them was needed and had something to offer. Jesus, Mary and Joseph had a purpose for their lives and through their faith and love of God they discerned and fulfilled God's will. From the beginning, they followed their vocation as individual persons and as a family.

They respected each other and accepted the mystery of each heart even though it caused pain and sometimes confusion. When I think about my family I can easily see that family is really a place of modelling each member as a person. It is the place where we learn to relate to each other, and the place we realise we are not islands in the world and we need each other to grow as a person. Secondly, this diversity of persons was united in community. They lived as a community, which means that they shared daily responsibilities according to their time, culture and customs. They shared their struggles and joys, challenges and successes. The community of these three persons was a place of growth and nourishment of deep relationship, belonging and trust. The Holy Family was a community based on love and faith. Only love makes a family able to embrace and unite differences. Only faith gives the strength to go through struggles and hardships. The Holy Family wasn't free from misunderstanding, confusion and a variety of difficulties. But love and strong faith sustained them to stay together. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, we read "The love between members of the family is given life and sustenance by an unceasing inner dynamism leading the family to ever deeper and more intense communion, which is the foundation and soul of the community of marriage and family."

Love is the bond that unites a family. Love is a decision to forgive and accept forgiveness; to reflect and be open for transformation; to accept and challenge myself and others; to be compassionate and merciful. Love is self-giving, self-abandoning, self-sacrificing, and always sees others first. St John Paul II wrote "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless." The Holy Family reminds us that family is the place where love is revealed to each member, the place where love is encountered and experienced and everyone makes their own.

I would like to finish my reflection with one more quality that is often missing in our lives and,

ironically, which we need tremendously. I am thinking about simplicity. When I look at Jesus, Mary and Joseph I always envy their simplicity of life and of faith. The home of the Holy Family in Nazareth was a sanctuary of ordinary and happy life. The source of their happiness was mutual love and faith, not luxury and splendour. Faithfulness to tradition, daily routine and simple gestures of love built peace and harmony in their home. Pope Francis wrote in *Amoris Laetitia* "Young married couples should be encouraged to develop a routine that gives a healthy sense of closeness and stability through shared daily rituals. These could include a morning kiss, an evening blessing, waiting at the door to welcome each other home, taking trips together and sharing household chores."

Nowadays, we all push to have and to experience more and more that it is hard to enjoy less and having simple things. This leads us to be selfish and self-centred persons who are unable to share, to be grateful and to be really happy in life. A life of billboards and advertisements encourages us to give up quickly when it is hard and to abandon people, friends and even God when they do not meet our expectations. The simplicity of Jesus, Mary and Joseph reminds us to be thankful and grateful in our lives. I mentioned only some qualities of the Holy Family that we can apply to ourselves, or at least think about. The Holy Family can still help us to build faithful and loving families. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the humble and beautiful family from Nazareth, always intercede for us.

BY SR MARGARET KOZUB



*Ang pagmamahal ang tanging
magbuklod at bubuo upang ang pamilya
ay magkaisa. Ating sundin ang
halimbawang ipinagkatiwala sa atin ni
Jesus, ni Maria at ni Jose.*



RENEWAL TIME IN ROME

I was long awaiting this special opportunity to attend the "Return to the Roots" program organised by Sr Halina Dolega, general Councillor and the team from the General House in Rome. The month (20.06-18.07.2018) of activities and reflections passed by too quickly.

The program was very well prepared and delivered. It gave us a good balance between listening to wonderful speakers, personal prayers and reflections and outings, pilgrimages to places related to our Mother Foundress as well as participating in the life of the Church – papal celebrations.

Sister Halina with the help of all the sisters from our General House were making sure that we are very well looked after and feel at home.

I would like to express my gratitude for giving me an opportunity to participate in this program. It was wonderful to meet the sisters from different parts of our Congregation and together follow the footsteps of our Mother Foundress.

We experienced enormous kindness, support and sisterly love.

We experienced NAZARETH in its most beautiful way.

BY SR EMILA SMOLAK



YEAR OF YOUTH



Our Sisters participated in the Australian Youth Festival in Sydney in December 2017

ФЕСТИВАЛЬ
КАТОЛИЧЕСКОЙ
МОЛОДЁЖИ В СИДНЕЕ.
КАЖДЫЙ МЕСЯЦ МЫ
МОЛИМСЯ О ПРИЗВАНИЯХ И
ПРОВОДИМ ВСТРЕЧИ ДЛЯ
МОЛОДЕЖИ.



Holy Hour for vocations is held every month in our Plumpton convent.



Throughout the year the sisters offer the individual discernment weekends and small group retreats for young people.

ASSOCIATION GATHERINGS



(Left) Our annual pilgrimage of the Association to Berrima (Oct 2018). All couples present renewed their vows and received a special individual family blessing. (Below) The meeting with the presence of our Superior General, M Jana Zawieja. (May 2018)

СУСТРЭЧА СЕМ'ЯЎ З ГЕНЕРАЛЬНАЙ
НАСТАЯЦЕЛЬНІЦАЙ
І ПІЛГРЫМКА У "АУСТРАЛІЙСКУЮ
ЧЭНСТАХОВУ".



JUBILEE OF THE SCHOOL IN GARRAN

This year the school Canberra celebrates 50 years since its foundation. Sisters participated in the celebrations of this occasion in March and September 2018.



CONSECRATED LIFE IS ALL ABOUT LOVE



On 26 October 2017 around 80 consecrated women and men from all corners of the Diocese of Parramatta, gathered at the beautiful Polish War Memorial Chapel at Marayong. They came together to celebrate Mass and to share an evening meal.

The principal celebrant of the Mass was Bishop Vincent Long O.F.M Cap, Bishop of Parramatta. He was joined by other religious priests in the Diocese (the Vicar-General of the Diocese was stuck in traffic unfortunately!) The Bishop emphasised in his homily that even though we were small in number, we must continue to be prophetic signs of the kingdom of heaven and to truly go into the deep, to seek the more in our lives and in our work. I felt these words really spoke to me as I am sure it did to everyone present. We apply it in our own way according to the form of consecrated life we are in. We might be small in number but God makes great use of the people who respond to his call of love.

At the Mass, the Vicar for Consecrated Life acknowledged my presence as a newly consecrated virgin. This made me feel that I was truly supported by sisters and brothers at the gathering, in a vocation where I do not have any religious sisters and brothers. It made me – all of

us, feel that we are truly part of a Holy Family of Nazareth.

During the evening meal, we made friends and reunited with other women and men who share similar lifestyles. We also welcomed the arrival of a new religious order in the Diocese – the Institute of the Incarnate Word, from Argentina. Who says the numbers are small when we have the blessings of a new order in the Diocese!

It was a wonderful evening of laughter, love, sharing and beautiful food. We were united in our diversity as we are all consecrated women and men mystically espoused and in love with Christ.

When I returned home, I felt so alive and invigorated by the blessings of the gathering. Consecrated Life is about love. It is about being joyful as spouses of Christ. It is about the more of life which are called to share with all our holy family, which is, in truth, is the kingdom of God. Gatherings like these are really supportive, fun and joyous occasions as we journey along as lovers and servants of Christ.

BY ZARA TAI

*Spotkanie osób konsekrowanych Diecezji
Parramatta było okazją do dzielenia się
wiarą i historią życia
i powołania.*



I LOVE MY CHURCH



A few months ago, I had a memorably off day. I was frustrated, tired and feeling sorry for myself. I couldn't focus on what mattered. My mind was restless, and by evening the prospect of our impending common Vespers and Rosary had made things worse. How I wished I could stay in my room, relishing in my miserable self-pity

and resentment, instead of dragging myself to the chapel for half an hour! I couldn't think of anything less appealing!

But drag myself I did. I stood and said the opening response, '*O God, make haste to help us!*', my entire body glowering. As we moved through the antiphons and psalms I withdrew more and more into myself, impatiently waiting for the final invocation so that I could hightail it out of there. And then we started to say the Magnificat. As I crossed myself and said the words of the Virgin Mary, whose spirit rejoiced in God her saviour, my spirit was doing anything but that. God, though, touches us so simply and profoundly.

The Magnificat continues later on: *His mercy is from age to age on those who fear him.* As those words passed before my eyes and through my lips, they found my heart too. I suddenly realised, in that moment, that despite my inward attitude of separation and isolation, our little community, praising God in this little chapel in our corner of the world, were united in such a profound way. We were united as and for the Church. As we prayed, I marvelled at the reality that all around the world, millions of people making up the Church would gather to say exactly the same words in their own time, places and languages. In that very moment, my sisters and I were intimately, lovingly connected not just with each other, but with people we had never met and would never meet. That is the unity of my Church, which I love. My frazzled spirit was beginning to un-frazzle as we moved through our prayers of intercession. As we prayed for our own needs and the needs of others in our world, I felt once again this unity which reaches such a high point in liturgical and sacramental life. As we prayed for peace, I suddenly remembered the words which are said by the priest during Mass following the Consecration: May our sacrifice, we pray

O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world. Salvation for all the world, not just for ourselves or for people who believe what we do. I realised again that the Church is always pushing us to look beyond ourselves, to meet Jesus present in those around us, to spread his love and joy and peace as far and as wide as we can. That is the call of my Church, which I love. That day, it was so easy for me to focus on myself because that was what I chose to do. The invitation of my Church, of her people and practices, is to make any focus on myself not an end in itself, but as something necessarily related to our love of God and of others. My Church offers me the opportunities to discover this interconnected self-identity, my vocation, my own Baptismal call. My personal experiences of God and my increasing knowledge of myself say to me in resounding unison that my call is to live as a consecrated woman, to live in love and for love. This call brings me the richest peace and contentment I've ever felt, and it's only possible because of my Church. This is the peace of my Church, which I love. Recently I met a wonderful woman who introduced me to a simple and profound prayer: **Lord, that I may see you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly, day by day.** The Church provides a beautiful space in which Jesus is revealed to us, in which we can love him more deeply and continue the mission he began. But again, it all begins with us asking for and opening ourselves up to the grace to see. That day in the chapel, I wasn't seeing clearly. Jesus was right before me in my sisters, in the words of our prayers, even in the True Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, but I wasn't seeing Him. I'd turned my eyes away. The Church, through the beauty of people, prayer, liturgy and Scripture, constantly directs our focus to Him who is always before us. This is the beauty of my Church, which I love. Some days we'll wake up and not feel like being Church. Sometimes we'll have bad days. But God always comes to us as we are and wherever we are. The depths of our misery, shame and bad days aren't obstacles for God. Yes, God comes and gently draws our frustrated, restless, rueful hearts back to where they should be. God draws my heart towards the Church, and there I find so much life, strength, comfort, hope, and encouragement that I don't want to be anywhere else. In and through my Church, Jesus is revealed to me, and I am given the space in which I can most effectively proclaim Jesus, his life and his love to others.

I love my Church!

BY SR SOPHIE BOFFA

MY GENTLE, FAITHFUL AND LOVING FRIEND



I first met the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth as a postulant in 1977 when our community was inviting to share a meal with the Sisters at St Andrew's in Marayong. I was able, at that first meeting to experience what I later understood to be one of the characteristics of their community – and that was hospitality. At the completion of my novitiate in Brisbane the Sisters in Stafford attended my First Profession. Over the years invitations passed back and forth between our two communities and although we tried to outdo the Sisters in the quality of our celebrations with them, as men I don't think we ever came close to matching it! But the Sisters were always gracious and we were none the wiser!

It was at one of these occasions that I first heard the story of Frances Siedliska and on hearing that the Capuchins were involved my interest was aroused. Sr Josita gave me a copy of the book "His Will Alone" and from that moment I was hooked. The book presented me with a portrait of a woman, who rather than allow difficulties, illness, her own personal doubts and struggles disable her, she used them to push herself forward to co-operate with God's plan. I came to see that "restlessness" is not a bad thing or something that can distract us. In the life of Frances it is what continually motivated her, gave her energy and strengthened her. She was a woman not afraid to

end relationships with people who unlike her did not fully understand the Nazareth mission or those whose part in that mission had ended – the two Capuchin Friars would, I think fall into this category!

In 1992 I spent a year studying in Rome and lived at the Capuchin Friary not far from Rome's Central Station. To my delight our Friary was only three streets away from the Sister's Convent on Via Machiavelli – it was here that Blessed Frances lived and died. During that year I made many visits to the Convent, prayed in the chapel and spent time in Mother Foundress's room. The Sisters also arranged for me to visit the General House and I was able to pray at the tomb of Frances. Before I left Rome the Sisters gave me a First Class Relic and it was this relic that was to accompany me through illness which was to become the next "big" thing in my life so far.

Upon my return to Australia I asked my friend Sr Rosanne for anything in English either about Blessed Frances or written by her. Rosanne loaned me copies of the "Letters" and "Conferences" of Mother Foundress. Reading these gave me an even more clearer understanding of the woman herself – as up till now all I had read was what others had written about her. I now had access to her own words and began to gain an insight into the deep spirituality and understanding that she possessed.

Life was good for me at this time and I was happy in my ministry, living at our Friary in Leichhardt. God, though has a way of intervening and at these times we are reminded that our life is according to His plan and not our own. This happened to me when in 2000/2001 I was diagnosed with an advanced and very aggressive cancer. The tumour had been growing for at least four years and had attacked the bowel, prostate and the bladder. I had

experienced no symptoms and was enjoying what I thought was good health. I had gone to the Doctor complaining of stomach cramps and when the cramps did not go away after taking some medication I went and had a scan as a matter of routine. Within days of getting the results of that scan I began a course of Chem.-therapy. The treatments were so strong that my body was unable to cope and I developed a form of blood poisoning. I became very unwell and the treatment was stopped. I was told that without Chemo it was unlikely that surgery alone would remove all the cancer as it was so advanced. At best I would have five years of good health although there were no guarantees. After the shock wore off one of the first people I rang after my family was Sr Rosanne and asked for her prayers and those of the Sisters. I later found out that not only were the Sisters in Australia praying for me but also the Sisters in Rome, as Rosanne had contacted them.

Before going to the hospital I distributed prayer cards of Blessed Frances to friends and asked them to pray to her on my behalf. I was Anointed and got one of our priests to bless me with the Relic of Blessed Frances. I took her image with me to hospital and it was beside my bed the whole time. The surgery took nine hours and in the days that followed I was to learn and feel just how major the surgery had been but also just how successful it had been also. The surgeon told me that despite the advanced state and extensive nature of the cancer he was confident that he managed remove it all, although tests in the weeks ahead would either prove or disprove his diagnosis. In the weeks ahead at different stages of my recovery the results of all the test and scans showed that all of the cancer was removed and there were now no active cancer cells present. I spent two months in hospital recovering before

coming home.

In speaking with my surgeon, Professor Michael Solomon I mentioned the fact that I believed that not only was his skill responsible for my good outcome but also, as a believing Christian that prayer for me was also a major factor. To my surprise he not only agreed but pointed out an article in a medical magazine of a study that concluded that a person's personal faith/prayers and the confidence in that faith and prayer can affect the outcome of the surgery in a positive way.

I firmly believe that it was through the intercession Blessed Frances Siedliska that I survived cancer and that she is still watching over me all these years later. All subsequent test still shows no active cancer cells. I still pray to her and still have her image with me – and I always will! I see her as I also do the Sisters, a friend, a sister and I draw strength from the fact that like me she struggled with ill health, that like me she got tired and needed to rest but that she always got up again and renewed everyday her willingness to co-operate with what God had planned for her.

I could look back at my illness and be depressed as I see the negative effects it has had on my life, the physical limitations, personal plans that will never be fulfilled and the fear of cancer returning. In fact one of the graces I believe I received through the intercession of Blessed Frances was the ability to see the positive effects, such as illness being God's invitation to me to draw closer to Him, to value each day as a gift and to be sensitive to others who are ill or suffer.

So really all through my life as a Capuchin at every significant stage there have been Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth – a gentle faithful presence offering friendship, love and encouragement. I could also say the same of Blessed Frances for she too is still, like them a gentle, faithful and loving friend. Someone who I talk to every day and someone who I love dearly.

BY BR MICHAEL O'DWYER OFM cap

*Brat Michael został uzdrowiony przez
wstawienictwo Matki
Założycielki.*



MUM'S JOURNEY HOME



My Mother, Dorothea Terese Sinclair, faced many challenges after being diagnosed with lymphoma in 2009, at the age of 78. Over the next few years

Mum was also diagnosed with macular degeneration and, later, symptoms of dementia. Mum had always been very healthy and active throughout her life, only ever being admitted to hospital to give birth to her seven children. After 2009 that changed. She endured more frequent hospitalization and eventually required "live-in" aged care. Mum had a simple, deep faith and as her body and mind gradually failed, her faith and love for God grew in profound depth and simplicity. Jesus and Mary were her constant companions as she faced the new challenges that increasingly became part of everyday life. Before moving into aged care and, later, on Sundays visits home, she loved to take part in Mass, whether in the aged care chapel or on television when at home. She knew Mass responses by heart even when she could no longer remember family names. Eventually, even that was taken from her. Although she heard what was being said she could no longer make sense of what she heard.

Mum began to develop a more simplistic manner when visiting or passing by the chapel in her wheelchair. She would ask where we were and then "blow a kiss" to Jesus in the tabernacle, saying loudly, "love you"! As she passed any statue of Mary, Mum would ask who it was and reach out to hold Mary's hand. She spoke openly to Mary as if speaking with another mother. Her words were usually the same: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you... Look after yourself love. You did a good job with Jesus. Take care". As health problems became more pronounced, Mum and family experienced difficult times as her mood changes sometimes became extreme. Good days became rare in her last year of life but she still remained ready to reach out a hand to "Mary" as we passed by her statue.

On 10 October 2017 my mother was admitted to Westmead Hospital with a life threatening condition and severe pain. Days later she was transferred to Mount Druitt Palliative Care Unit. As Mum's deterioration became increasingly obvious, Fr. Greg Morgan (my sister Julie's brother-in-law), came to offer Mum the last rites. On the evening of Wednesday, 18 October, family members, sisters and

family friends, stood by my Mother's bed, encircling her with prayer and our love. Mum remained still, eyes closed, non-responsive to words spoken to her or to any touch during the anointing of her body. Although it was impossible to tell for sure, I sensed Mum had some awareness of what was happening despite her inability to show any obvious response. This proved to be true.

As the last rites drew to a close, all present witnessed something both precious and humbling as Fr. Greg broke a tiny piece from a "Consecrated Host" he had brought for Mum. He put the tiny particle to Mum's lips but her jaw locked as it had locked each time anyone tried to feed her during past weeks. Facing Mum's hesitance, Fr. Greg passed the tiny Eucharistic particle to me, since I was nearest to Mum on the opposite side of the bed. I spoke softly to her, telling her it was not ordinary food... "it's the Eucharist", I said. "It's Jesus"! I immediately felt Mum's lips begin to loosen, against the touch of my thumb, but I could still feel her jaw ready to lock if we were forcing her to eat.

Suddenly, as I slipped the host between my mother's lips, her face immediately changed. Mum recognised the familiar taste of her Lord! Her previously taunt expression became relaxed as she raised her two hands and placed them, one hand on top of the other, across her mouth. She began kissing the palm of her hand, as if attempting to kiss the Eucharist she had just received. A gasp of surprise could be heard coming from those in the room as they witnessed what happened. Mum then reached out and took my hand in her hands and began kissing my hand. I could not believe the strength I felt in the hand that held mine! I eventually slipped Father Greg's hand into her hand and she kissed his hand in gratitude. Her eyes were still closed but her body became filled with strength. We then heard words being spoken, softly at first, from Mum's lips. Not understanding what she said and shocked that she could still speak, we asked Mum what she wanted. She then said, more loudly and with great effort.... "I'm Happy.....I'm very, very happy"! To make her meaning clearer she said, even more loudly.... "JOY", as she raised her hands upward a little. These were the last words spoken by my Mother. God's gift to her and to us!

One week later, at 10.45am on 25 October, Mum slipped away into the arms of her beloved God, surrounded by family members who heard no sound as they realised Mum's breathing had silently stopped. I learned so much from my mother's simple yet profound faith, not only evident in her last days. As Mum lived her life, so did she travel her final journey home! My Mother lived a hidden life of love: she was not perfect, but always faithful to the journey!

BY SR ROSANNE SINCLAIR

COMING HOME

There are many experiences of homecoming in my life. The very first one is, of course, the one I always recall with the greatest fondness whereby I received the gift of life and the love of the people closest to my heart: my mum, my dad and my sister. Going home is, and will always be, something special and unique. As I grew up and left that home I was called to live in the one given to me through my vocation to consecrated life. The religious community would never be a replacement for the family life I knew as a child and young adult but it is, and should be, a home. Home is the place of safety and joy and also sometimes of arguments, heartaches and tension. But home is most of all the place to which we all want to return; it is a bond, a relationship which we create with one another. This July (04-25 July, 2018), I was privileged to participate in three weeks' study of the Book of Leviticus at the [Bat Kol Institute](#) in Jerusalem where each year Christians have an opportunity to study the Bible within Jewish milieu, using Jewish Sources. The program was intense and filled with many experiences. Almost every day started with learning and praying the Siddur, the Jewish daily prayers, followed by Hebrew lessons and various lectures delivered by rabbis from the various synagogues, reflecting on many key themes found in the third book of the Old Testament. There were many opportunities for "Havruta" study of the Bible which traditionally involves breaking open the Word of God in small groups of 2 – 4 students. The participants and teachers came from various parts of the world: Israel, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Ireland and they represented many other nationalities by their country of origin (Brazil, Korea, Canada, Ireland, Poland, Tonga, United States and Britain.) Among them were three priests, consecrated brothers and sisters and pastoral ministers. Each week students were invited to join the Shabbat dinner at the accommodation (St Charles Hospice) and to prayer in the reformed synagogues in Jerusalem. The richness of these experiences broadened our horizons of thinking about our faith and were truly inspirational. We discussed what we had learnt and increased our learning through our shared experiences. We prayed in the Jewish tradition and gladly celebrated the Eucharist in our Roman Catholic rite.

What really united us with our Jewish neighbours was our faith: different faiths perhaps, but both striving to understand the divine and connect it with the human experience. Some of the participants from the congregation of the [Brothers of Sions](#) currently live in Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Their being local was extremely helpful (as our generous, knowledgeable tour guides!) for those of us who were there for the first time. We

used every break we had, every moment of free time, to reach out and touch, see, smell and taste the places where our Lord lived and died. There were tears of emotion shared in the Garden of Olives, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of the Beatitudes, the Church of the Visitation, and many other places. For me, as a Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the visit to the Basilica of the Annunciation and the Church of St Joseph in Nazareth were extremely special. Powerful moments of emotion happened for me when I brought to these places in prayer those people I love (and/or don't love enough yet!), those who asked for prayers, those I would love to have been there with me, and those I know who have dreamed all their life of being in the Holy Land but cannot yet be here.

After three weeks of intense study and immersion in the Jewish tradition, the Book of Leviticus became more understandable for us. Following the call of the Vaticanum II expressed in the declaration [Nostra Aetate](#), we started to make our journey home aware and encouraged to be the sign of dialogue and unity between Christians and our Jewish brothers and sisters. Although the study never ends, we know at least a bit more of what constitutes the basis for holiness: being able to contemplate God and be in awe of our God. On the last day of the course, each of us received a special blessing and blessed others. The Bat Kol Founding Director Sr Maureen Fritz, Academic Director Dr Marcie Lenk and the Executive Secretary Rev. Gill Putnam, sent us off with encouragement to never give up learning, to find Bible study partners, continue learning Hebrew and...to return to Jerusalem.

At the end of the stay, I prayed with gratitude and tears, simply feeling overwhelmed with the blessings I have received in my life: the day God gave my parents the grace of giving me life, calling me to consecrated life and allowing me to enjoy these past three weeks in the Holy Land.

The experience in Jerusalem was like coming HOME....

BY SR GRACE ROCLAWSKA



MARAYONG – MEETING PLACE FOR MANY



On the 20th of August 2018, after morning Mass I was walking on our property with the box of chocolates: smiling and telling everybody that today is a birthday of our Holy Patron Saint Brother Albert! Usually for the birthday we have a party but this party was very unexpected! The gift of PRESENCE and the presents came from the most distinguished guests the President of Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda and the First Lady, Agata Konhauser-Duda.

It was my privileged to welcome the Presidential couple in front of our Polish War Memorial Chapel and walked with them to offer a short prayer in the front of Our Mother in the image of Black Madonna. We, Polish people call her Our Lady of Czestochowa – Queen of Poland. This is the place where for more than 52 years our Lady is waiting for all people, no matter which background they have. She is always waiting...especial for Polish people and then when they come they feel at home.



After this short prayer we walked to Holy Family Services, Age Care – Br Albert's home where the Sisters, staff and residents were waiting to welcome the First Lady and show her around. The encounter with her

was such a warm happy moments for all. The conversation included the memories of Poland our residents have left many years ago and compliments they expressed about being "at home". It was hard to move on but after taking "family photo", signing the guest book and exchanging beautiful gifts for the table – altar in the chapel, the liturgical clothing and a coffee table serviettes we had to proceed to the next point of the evening. On the way to John Paul II Polish hall, the presidential couple stopped for the moment of silence and gave the flowers by the "Smolensk – memory rock" for those who lost there life in April 2010. In the spirit of feeling at home more the 800 hundred people welcome The President and First Lady with big applause in JPII hall. Everybody was so happy to be there and had a life opportunity to sing the national hymn with a big voice like never before in Polish and the Australian as well since this is our home now. Poland was here this night! Than the words of official welcome on behalf of the Polish Community came from the Counsel General of Poland – Regina Jurkowska and Fr Tadeusz Przybylak Schr – how good is to be here ...



And a very special moment for our Polish Language School which was represented by our young students, their dedicated teachers and parents. The President Andrzej Duda and the First Lady were welcomed with song, poetry and a formal card prepared by our students. The atmosphere was electric, patriotic and warm. The President with his natural manner, interest and care entered into the spirit of the evening. But more was to come. Sr Agnieszka Misiak was one of many people who were honoured with the presentation by Mr. President, of the Polish Gold Cross of Merit. Great joy and pride for our school, for Sr Agnieszka personally and the

wider Polish Community. Sr Agnieszka, with the acknowledgement of the many Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth who paved the way for today successes.

This day will be etched in our heart and will be carried as a historical event that we in our school we able to be a part of history. The concluding words from Mr President with the invitation to go back to Poland were very touching...

Yes, we miss our country but we have our place – a very happy home for all. The evening was so colourful with polish national dresses and joyful than never before with singing and dancing

The memory of this Birthday party with the PRESENCE and the presents that we/I was talking about in the morning will say with us for ever! And the story-telling has just begun ... for the next generation to come and call this place HOME.

The name of our place is Marayong came from an Aboriginal word “emu” or “place of the cranes” but I have my own definition: “a meeting place”.

BY SRS LUCYNA FRACZEK
AND AGNIESZKA MISIAK

INDEPENDENCE OF POLAND

On 1- 3 June 2018 in Sydney the Executive Committee of the Polish Community Council of Australia (PCCA) hosted Australia's main celebrations commemorating the Polish Republic's 100th anniversary of independence proclaimed in 1918, following over 120 years of partitions and purposeful obliteration of Polish cultural heritage. [...] The three days of celebrations were honoured by the attendance of special guests namely, His Excellency, Mr Michał Kołodziejcki, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Australia (Honorary Patron of centennial celebrations); the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney, Ms Regina Jurkowska; Vice Consul, Ms Dorota Preda; Ms Małgorzata Gosiewska, MP, the Republic of Poland; Mr Wojciech Ziemniak, MP, the Republic

of Poland; The Hon. David Clarke, MLC representing the Minister for Multiculturalism Ray Williams MP; The Hon. Jason Faliński MP; The Hon. Stephen Bali MP; and The Hon. Robert Borsak MP. Many of the invited Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth from Marayong and many Polish priests also attended. The Ambassador, Consul General and Polish MPs took part in each of the events during the three days of celebrations in Sydney.

BY ITA SZYMANSKA

For FULL ARTICLE go to: www.polishcouncil.org.au



30 ANNIVERSARY OF ASSOCIATES IN CANBERRA



The day finally arrived on Saturday 21st October 2017 for the friends and Associates of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth to join the Sisters for a day trip from Sydney to Canberra to meet the Associates and their friends for a special gathering to celebrate the 30th Anniversary from the commencement of the Association in Canberra, which in later years branched out into Sydney with gatherings being held in Castle Hill and Marayong.

On arriving at St John the Apostle Catholic Church in Kippax, the welcoming Canberra Associates greeted us with morning tea in the tastefully arranged Parish hall. They often attend our bi-monthly gathering in Sydney and it was good to meet them on their home ground this time. Some of the Associates present at this gathering, travelled even as far as Victoria. (...)

It was then time for Mass celebrated by Fr Dominic at the Parish Church of St John the Apostle, where he also served for four years in the late nineties. In his sermon, Fr Dominic explained six points to follow as a guide to reaching holiness in our lives. This was to bless, pray, be truthful, encourage others, listening to God in silence, and to be grateful.

A scrumptious lunch prepared by our friends in Canberra, concluded this special Associates gathering where new friendships were made, and others rekindled.

BY MARIA DE CARLO

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*Uczestnicy spotkania
Stowarzyszenia Najświętszej
Rodziny w Kanberze.*