

THE Catholic Weekly

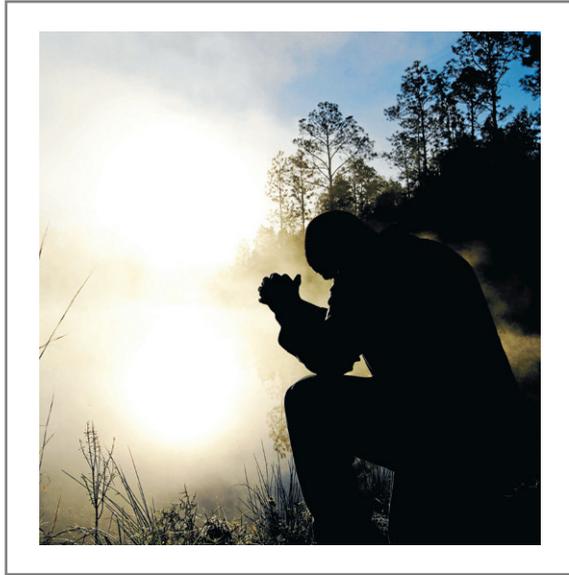


vocations MAGAZINE

2020

The Good Shepherd Seminary at Homebush.
Seminarians ... Kieu Le, Julian Masiello, Jacob Yako,
Menard Gaspi. PHOTO: ALPHONSUS FOK

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CATHOLIC VOCATIONS 2020

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VOCATIONS

NOLA DRUM the mother of nine boasts three children who have entered religious life with son Steve (pictured above), a Verbum Dei Missionary, ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Terry Brady. Her daughter Rosie is a Sister with the Missionary of God's Love and her son Daniel, also a Verbum Dei Missionary, is hoping to be ordained later this year. The three siblings agree they were very "fortunate" to be raised in a family that was open to promoting vocations, allowing them to be "exactly where God wants them".



FULL STORY
www.catholicweekly.com.au
Deacon follows in siblings' steps

Singleness

Your singleness can become a powerful source for good in the Church - if you will let it.



By *Philippa Martyr*

There is no such thing as 'the single vocation'. Thankfully some great Catholic writers like Mary Beth Bonacci and Jessica Keating have already said this in public, so it's all okay.

Singleness is our default setting. We are born single, and we die single. Marriage is dissolved at death, so you go before God with no wedding ring. We have a single soul to save. Married couples try to help save each other's souls, but ultimately, it's down to you.

We don't need to pray for 'more single vocations', because we are already richly blessed with single Catholics. We've been here all along, holding the underlying fabric of the Church together.

Western families have been unravelling for decades. Multiple wars killed millions of men and thrust enormous economic and social burdens on to women. Rapid economic, industrial, and medical changes like contraception also did huge damage.

So God is allowing a growing number of Catholics to remain unmarried. Not all of them are willing participants, but most will acknowledge that there are some obvious problems out there.

These include almost universal pornography addiction, marriage breakdown, high housing costs, high levels of personal debt, and chronic job insecurity. None of these things makes lifetime commitment attractive, or sometimes even possible.

Being a single Catholic is not about unlimited skiing holidays and unbroken sleep (although the unbroken sleep is a plus). Your singleness can become a powerful source for good in the Church - if you will let it.

All of the things I recommend here will also help you to become good spouse material. Please don't think that marriage is going to solve your problems. It's going to complicate your existing problems terribly if you don't do the work now.

It's important first to work through

self-pity and anger at singleness. This can require facing parts of your lifestyle and personality that make you ashamed or even frightened. See a counsellor if you must; it can and does help.

You should also find a reliable spiritual director. When you can't (!), then find a priest who can become your regular confessor. This priest should know you by name, have common sense, and take your confessions seriously.

This is every bit as good as formal spiritual direction. You will start getting into a regular prayer routine, and you might find you are attending Mass more often. Your relationship with God - direct and simple and uncomplicated - will grow stronger.

And you will be happier. God loves single people. Jesus chose to be single, and His closest friends - John, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha - all seem to have been single as well. It's one of the best kept secrets of Catholic singleness.

Single Catholics need friends - male and female, married and single, old and young. They should be good friends, some intimate, and some more casual. Quality over quantity - but they must be real life friends, not just Instagram followers.

Single Catholics also need purpose - and this is between you and God because He knows what talents you have, and what you still need to develop. Get involved. Not everything you try will be a success, but try anyway.

Your baptismal vocation empowers you to stand tall in the Church - but you must learn to stick up for yourself. Single people can cop a lot of flak, even from good Catholics (especially the ones who need unbroken sleep).

Single Catholics don't have to be stuck with the washing up at the Banquet of the Lamb. We can bring a massive cake, and we can also take home the leftovers - all twelve baskets of them.

Fr Long embarks on Aussie mission



Born and raised on the Mekong Delta river in South Vietnam, Fr Long Nguyen SVD could have ended up a businessman, but instead he chose to become a missionary priest and he is looking forward to taking up his first assignment, in Australia.

Fr Long first spent a year in Australia in 2012 as part of his training with the Divine Word Missionaries, as well as a year in Thailand, and he couldn't wait to come back.

Long grew up in a faithful Catholic family and at a young age he developed a dream of becoming a priest.

"I went to Church every day and it made me happy," he says.

Another thing that made Long happy was business. After working in his family's business as he grew older, he began to dream more of a life in business than the priesthood.

While he was studying at the University of Saigon, his elder sister, who was a nun

of the Lovers of the Holy Cross, began reminding him about his dream of being a priest.

Eventually, after praying an intense Novena to discern God's will, Long's uncle rang him from out of the blue.

"He said: 'The Divine Word Missionaries are having an entrance exam in a month. If you are still inspired in the vocation, you should come and see,'" Long said.

"That was the way God called me to become a missionary."

Long joined the SVD in 2007 and took his first vows in 2010. He was ordained to the priesthood in December 2018 in Saigon and made Australia the top choice for his first missionary assignment.

He arrived in Melbourne last year and has been studying English while working in the Preston Parish and will soon take up his first assignment, as assistant priest at St Maximilian Kolbe Parish in Marsden, Brisbane.

Long says he's looking forward to getting to know the people in his new parish and immersing himself in the local culture.

"I know that working in a new culture is not easy and I am still working at the language, but those are the challenges for any missionary," he says.

"I know that God always blesses, accompanies and supports me on my way. God has a plan for me."



The love of Christ impels us

2 Cor 5:14



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A career grounded in Mission

For many people, taking the steps towards a career grounded in Mission can feel overwhelming.

The good news is it doesn't have to be as Australian Catholic University (ACU) Master of Theological Studies graduate Louwana Saba can attest. Louwana was enjoying a successful career as a high school teacher, but she wanted to take on a new professional challenge in the Mission space.

Louwana managed to change career from teaching to working as a Mission Integration Manager for the Mater Hospital in Sydney after completing a Master of Theological Studies through the ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Louwana said there are two clear impacts from undertaking postgraduate study in theology at ACU.

"The first is that I have an increased knowledge base in areas of my work because of my theological studies, which naturally gives me a greater sense of confidence and competence in my work.

"The second is that because I have studied theology in a



Louwana Saba, Mission Integration Manager for the Mater Hospital in Sydney.

postgraduate course, I have begun to consider future possibilities of theological studies and research relating to my field of work. I'm able to connect things I learnt with things I am doing in practice, and I'm finding that there are areas of ministry work that could

benefit from more study and research. I am able to observe that because I have a background in theological studies."

Louwana especially recommends postgraduate study for those reassessing their skill set, particularly those who are looking to grow a career in the

Mission space.

"My postgraduate study gave me a wide range of experience and knowledge in a breadth of areas within theology to build up my skill set across the field. For example, my study of ethics gave me a well-informed foundation in Catholic ethics

to be able to better understand the approach of my organisation to issues relating to bio-ethics.

"Likewise, my study in biblical studies gave me a strong understanding in areas of spirituality and practical theology that are connected with my work, including the application of Catholic Social Teachings and developing formative programs and activities for staff inspired by Scripture."

And what would Louwana say to someone wanting a career in the Mission space?

"Studying at ACU is a great way to focus your attention on key elements of mission and ministry work. Be sure to choose a variety of subjects as your work in Mission will require you to be diverse and capable in a diverse set of skills.

"And most of all, enjoy the support and encouragement you receive from staff and peers when studying at ACU, as those connections in this work can be lifelong."

Seeking a career grounded in Mission? Visit acu.edu.au

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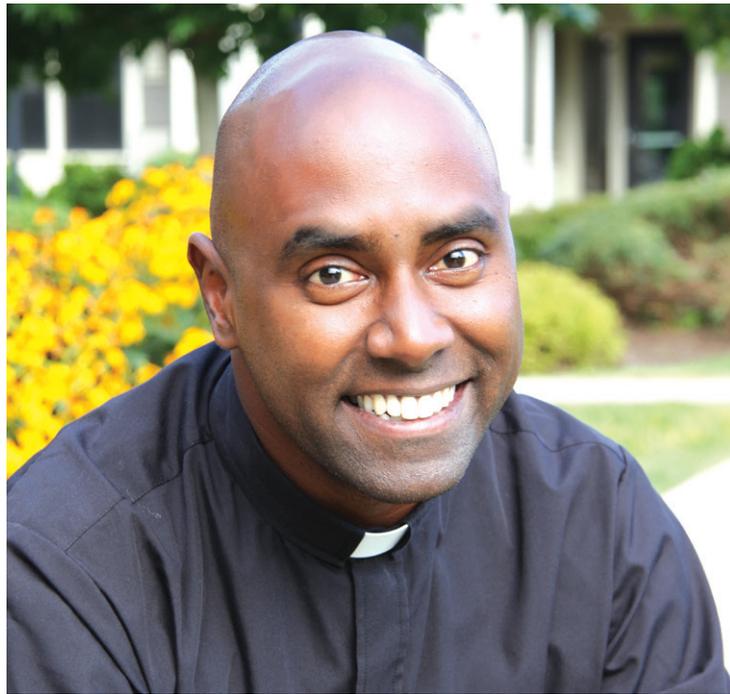
Ramesh Richards SJ will be ordained at St Mary's North Sydney on 8 August 2020. He joined the Jesuits in 2010, and is currently based in Sydney as the Rector of the Cardoner Project.

Can you tell us about your current ministry at the Cardoner Project?

It's a young adult ministry based at the intersection of three different universities – UTS, the University of Sydney and the University of Notre Dame.

We run a volunteer-based restaurant on the ground floor, and above that we've got a residence for university students. At the moment we've got 20 students - men and women - in university studies. We also organize immersions and service programs in many different countries, until recently when we had to recall everyone due to the pandemic.

Because of the pandemic we've closed the restaurant, so the space has become a collection point for food for Jesuit Refugee Service. We've also begun offering this space for homeless people to come and enjoy a meal. So many things



Ramesh Richards SJ.

are happening right now, good things. The pandemic has allowed us to rethink and find new ways to serve the community.

What's your role as Rector and what gives you life in that role?

Every day is unique. I might come into work at 7 30 in the morning, having some agenda

in my head. Half of it will get done, but most of it will not get done because, you know, working with young people they just come and knock on your door and I welcome that.

One minute I might be writing a reference letter for someone applying for a scholarship, next minute I'm writing something else or having a cuppa

with somebody who needs to have a chat or spiritual direction.

Now with the pandemic, I find myself online a lot more, just touching base with people wanting to catch up especially more from the spiritual point of view and discerning their way forward.

As a Rector my role here is to encourage these spiritual conversations, to walk with our staff and our volunteers and just listen. It's a privilege to just listen and hear how God operates in everybody's life.

What has your ministry taught you about your vocation and your faith?

The young people are showing me what the future of the Church looks like.

I am not denying the tension in the faults of the Church, and we need to hold that, but at the same time we've also got these young people – who are disillusioned by the Church in some ways. But I find that in some ways, it's the language of the Church they're disillusioned by rather than the full reality. If we show them what Church looks like, what community looks like, and how faith life is

lived concretely, they want to be part of this.

Many of the young men and women who have come and spoken to me about religious vocation, they are not denying this reality but they also see the life-giving church and they want to serve both. That's the future of the Church for me, and I want to be part of this story.

What you would say to a young man considering religious life in the Jesuits in particular?

Ministry in the Church is for the community. It is for the people of God, and wider it's for God's creation.

If one can see that one is called to something bigger, something life-giving, consider religious life because the world is hungering for the Eucharist.

I would welcome you to join me in this ministry because I can assure you it is life-giving.

To listen to the full interview with Ramesh as part of the 'Cuppa with a Jesuit' series, and find out more about what it means to #beajesuit, go to facebook.com/JesuitVocationsAustralia

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The call to be a parent

How many parents can state with confidence that, at the time of their child's arrival, they were perfectly prepared for what they were to experience in the first year of their child's life, let alone the 20 or so years that children take to grow into adulthood!

Parents are called to a lifelong vocation to LOVE and to teach their children what love is, what it looks like, and what it feels like through the experience of being loved.

By *Steve Buhagiar*

How many parents can state with confidence that, at the time of their child's arrival, they were perfectly prepared for what they were to experience in the first year of their child's life, let alone the 20 or so years that children take to grow into adulthood!

Of course, none of us are as prepared as we would like to be, but in truth, it is essential that we have the intention of forming ourselves in the essentials of Christian parenthood. To state it quickly and concisely, parents are called to a lifelong vocation to LOVE and to teach their children what love is, what it looks like, and what it feels like through the experience of being loved.

We start with the foundational knowledge that all parenthood is a share in the Fatherhood of God. When we consider that God is Love and that all His children are created in love, to be loved, and to love, we have to acknowledge, that every parent has been given the gift and responsibility to be the human face of this Love to each child given to their care.

This is the heart of the vocation and call to be a parent.

This is a responsibility which cannot be delegated to another. This is a responsibility which has to be carried out intentionally. A parent must be keenly aware that if they do not show the loving face of the Father to their child, their child will very likely suffer in the long term from this most keenly felt of all deprivations. We are made for love and without it, there is much emptiness and loss.

In essence then, a parent's call or vocation in life is to love and to be an explicit face of Love. This reality can never be overstated. We live in a society where individuals have been deprived of love to the extent that they in turn do not know how to express love authentically and, just as importantly, how to identify and receive authentic love! This experience of love and the manner of identifying and giving love authentically is what we can call an 'education in love'. We must help our children know that to love is a choice; an exercise in freedom!

Again, a key problem today is that we are living out a gener-

ational loss of the experience of love so it is even more imperative for parents to understand what the Church means when it teaches about love as a "gift of self". This term is drawn more properly from the following sentence: "Man (or woman) cannot fully find himself, except through a sincere gift of self." This reference from the document *Gaudium et Spes*, highlights that we are intrinsically called to give of ourselves for the good of the other. That is, we are called to love as Jesus loved on the Cross; a total self-emptying in love for the good of the other.

There is an old axiom "that we cannot give what we don't have". In order for parents to teach their children the path of loving rightly, they must be credible witnesses of this most critical of all life skills. How do I know how I am going in this regard as a parent? Well the best advice one can receive here is, "Ask your spouse!" A parent will hear very quickly where he and she stands in this regard and where one's skill set is lacking. Hopefully, it will also highlight where 'being loved rightly' is most evident. This

little exercise has the potential to be a life changing practice! Do it often. Moreover, ask your children how you stack up in this regard too!

In light of this honest appraisal, recognise that it provides an opportunity for us parents to broach the sensitive issue of 'love' especially if it has not been going too well of late. Honesty here is the best policy precisely because it is honesty in the area of loving rightly that is most appreciated and valued. It is in these honest conversations where we can define that love is a "gift of self" to the other and that it is, in fact, what makes us, as human beings, the most perfect image of God in creation. When we fail to love authentically, we distort the image of God and render to the other a misrepresentation of who we are inherently called to be.

As parents, let us remember that we are THE most visible face of the Father to our children. This is our primary and most important calling in life. It is our vocation. It is our own path, and our children's guiding light, to heaven itself.



Sisters of St Paul de Chartres Australia

The Bet - The beginning of my religious vocation

I am the middle child in a family of six siblings. Although I was born in the same intensely difficult period as thousands of other families after the Vietnam War, I had always received much affection, care and support from my parents, as well as from my brothers and sisters.

As a child I had witnessed by chance, the harrowing death of my neighbour as she was about to give birth. Since then I had always wished to one day become a medical doctor.

After completing year 12, I devoted all my energy and efforts into preparation for the medical school examination. In those days, all five friends of mine, 2 males and 3 females, had wanted for quite some time, to offer their lives to God.

Later, the three boys joined a major seminary, while the two girls decided to test their vocation with Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres. I was the only one to stay home and prepare for the university examinations.

One particular Sunday after the parish Mass for children, we, the catechists gathered together with the Parish Priest at his presbytery. Before we left, he called me, smiling, and said:

"Two of your friends had stayed with the Sisters...one lasted for a week, and the other for a month...But for you I have a deal! My bet is that you will not last more than three days in the convent. If however you do survive for more than three days, I will give you anything you wish!"

I answered him without thinking: "Are you very sure Father? You will give me...anything?"

"Yes," he said..."anything I have."

I responded straight away: "...Even your motorbike,



yeah?" I had been hoping to get one to ride to school every day. My Parish Priest agreed without hesitation.

After a tough time convincing my parents to let me stay for three days with the Sisters, they finally agreed. I had never revealed to anyone about the "bet" between the Parish Priest and myself.

That night I knocked on the doors of the convent. My house is not far from the convent, just a short walking distance. Everything went smoothly...All the sisters welcomed me warmly, and agreed for me to come to stay for three days.

Next morning I returned to the convent and commenced my "three day trial."

There was an elderly Sister called Marie. She accompanied me throughout my three days at the convent. Sister Marie worked as a tailor, and would mend or alter old clothes for

her sisters in the community. That whole day I followed her around. Sometimes I sat with her to help undo the old clothes. She sewed and told me stories at the same time. At prayer time, I followed her to the chapel. I was following like a robot, as my mind was pre-occupied with lessons and studies which I was trying to memorise for my coming exams.

That night, I felt joy was coming to me as the winner (of the bet). There were only two more days to go. If it was like this for the next two days, I would certainly win the bet! With that exciting thought in mind, I fell quickly into dream-land.

The convent bell rang and woke me at 4:a.m. It was not difficult for me to get up at that time, as my parents would often rise early to pray, and then go to Mass. At home however,

I would be woken by the noise, and went straight back to sleep. Here at the convent, I had to get out of my comfortable bed!

When I opened the door, Sister Marie stood there, waiting to accompany me to the chapel. During our time of meditation I was given a Bible by Sister Marie, which had been marked with the reading of the day. When I opened it, a scriptural passage jumped out at me: "Vanity of vanity...everything is vanity." Interestingly, this was the phrase which was always on my father's lips. Suddenly I missed my family so much, although I had only been away for a day.

That scriptural continued to echo in my ears: "Vanity of vanity, everything is vanity... It is pointless to win the whole world, if you lose your soul!" My heart really sank! All day I just wished to be left alone.

Something happened within me, but I was not sure what it was. I continued to repeat my father's favourite scriptural quotation in my mind. Then I asked Sister Marie if I could keep that Bible.

When I was alone in my room that night, I was not happy at all. Reaching for the Bible, I trembled when I read the passage from St John 15:16. "You did not choose me...no, I chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit... fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you anything you ask in my name." For me, this was like a command, a challenge full of promise. The whole night I was not able to close my eyes; I was tossing and turning and thinking...

Now the Parish Priest was not the one with whom I placed my "bet", but God...the PERSON who commissioned me to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

After months of soul-searching, discernment, prayer and careful consultation, I readily accepted the challenge. From that time on, I threw myself into an exciting new "bet". (In this new bet, I look to win human souls, not a motorbike!)

Here we go!...It's me!...I was back again, knocking on the doors of the Sisters of St Paul's convent. But this time I would not ask to stay for only three days...

To sum up my life, after 20 years I have been playing and pursuing the new bet, with much joy, happiness and peace. Through the grace of God, I pray that I may be granted the courage and strength to attain the spiritual goals of my bet. These are also the goals for the journey of my religious vocation.

A short reflection of a Permanent Deacon

By John Ting

When I was thinking about becoming a deacon, I was interested in what more I can be in my own circumstances: married with children and working with university students.

I was also looking for deeper answers to my own existential question of the meaning of my life. Something I think not unusual for men of my age.

The first couple of years in formation was a struggle. I was unsettled, expecting the program to fit into my well-established life. I am sure it was due to all the prayers of my family and friends, in the second year, I felt an internal freedom to accept, to stop worrying and just did my best.

As a result, I enjoyed the friendship of my fellow aspirants and grew personally. Looking back, I realise that God was able to use my short-sighted desires for His purpose. He gave me a greater meaning and purpose but, in the process, took my gaze away from myself to embrace more of Him.

Being a permanent deacon helps me understand better



that marriage is directed towards the salvation of others and that my salvation is only possible through service of

others, starting with my family. My family life does not somehow magically transform for the better as a matter of course.

The struggle remains, only that my service, including my struggle is more bound up with Him as a sign of His love for us.

The transformation is real though. Now, whenever I cook dinner and set the table for the family, the actions take on a sacred feel and I am reminded of my connection to the Church.

At times, I feel it intensely that I am feeding the domestic church. In my opinion, the permanent diaconate done right is the perfect union of the Sacraments of Marriage and Orders.

I am now assigned to the beautiful St Benedict's Church at Broadway with Fr Epeli. What difference can a deacon make in a parish in the middle of the city?

Not much. Unless he is with a bunch of people who is nourished and energised by the love of God to love one another, 'living stones' that are willing and able to build a new civilisation of love in our homes and our cities. Pray that you and I can contribute to making that vision a reality.

You are also welcome to contact the Directorate in person by calling (02) 9390 5941 or email: diaconate@sydneycatholic.org

A humble servant of Christ

If you are a man of mature Catholic faith, actively involved in your parish and feel called to serve, consider becoming a Deacon.

**DIRECTORATE OF THE
Permanent Diaconate**
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

Are you ready for marriage?

Commit, wait, or quit. Before you take the next step consider these signs.



By *Francine & Byron Pirola*

1 *Self-growth* - You've grown and your partner has grown. A willingness to grow is fundamental to life-long marriage. No one is perfect, but if you're prepared to grow, there's hope that things will get better. If there's no willingness to grow, there's no hope and the future is bleak. A marriage without hope is a desolate place.

2 *Family Approval* - Your family approves of your choice and you have good relationships with your partner's family. If everyone in your family is shunning the relationship, there's a good chance they can see something you can't. Listen to the concerns, and if they have merit, take them on board.

3 *Friends aplenty* - You have maintained healthy friendships and your friends affirm your relationship. No single person, no matter how amazing, can ever meet your every need. The absence of friends to meet our emotional needs is not a good enough reason to commit to marriage and will almost certainly backfire.

4 *Attraction* - You enjoy a healthy attraction for each other and share a sexual energy. The key word here is 'healthy'. A relationship consumed by uncontrollable lust will struggle to maintain sexual exclusivity. Equally so,

a relationship with low sexual passion will struggle to maintain intimacy.

5 *Sacrifice* - You are prepared to make sacrifices for each other and for the relationship. All good things have a cost. To establish a life-long marriage, both of you should be willing to prioritise the relationship and your emerging family over your own interests, surrendering recreational hobbies, personal preferences and career opportunities if necessary.

6 *Boundaries* - You respect each other's boundaries, whether they are moral, sexual, financial, physical or emotional. Respecting boundaries is one of the principle ways you honour and value each other. If either of you routinely disrespect the other's boundaries, resentment and wounds will accumulate in your relationship and undermine it.

7 *Communication* - You talk regularly and deeply, sharing your inner thoughts, dreams, fears, emotions and needs. You've discussed your future goals and religious beliefs and are open to exploring each other's spirituality. If your communication has plateaued, work to reinstate it before you commit to the next stage.

8 *Trust* - You don't withhold information from each other or keep secrets. You have disclosed your past mistakes and history. You are transparent about how you spend your money, with who you spend your time and what you do when apart.

9 *Values* - You've confirmed your values with each other, especially the marital values of fidelity, openness to children, unconditional sharing, exclusivity and permanence. If you plan to marry in the Catholic Church, these are considered basic features.

10 *Free Will* - You have dealt with any addictions, mental illness or past relationships. If you are not in full possession of your will, you cannot make a free and total commitment to marriage. Get help and get well before you proceed further.

The '*Forever Conversation*' is an important one. It happens not in a single instant, but over weeks and months and is a vital part of your discernment for marriage. Do it well and your future marriage will thrive.

Francine & Byron Pirola are the co-authors of *SmartLoving*. www.smartloving.org



The sacrament of Baptism

Michael Altenburger says that single life – the unmarried state - forms the bedrock of Christian living. And he argues this based on the sacrament of Baptism.

By *Philippa Martyr*



A man called Michael Altenburger gave me a wonderful gift back in 2017. He published an article in an online periodical called *Church Life Journal* which changed my thinking about baptism and the Christian vocation.

He says that single life – the unmarried state - forms the bedrock of Christian living. And he argues this based on the sacrament of Baptism.

Here's how it works. In Western culture, we measure things by results. We value a process based on what and how much it produces.

But this thinking tends to slip into the Church as well. We start looking at the Church as something that has to produce vocational results: priests, religious, married people.

This leaves single people as the awkward by-product of this process. People then try to tidy us up into marriage or religious life. (There's also the recently-invented carbon-copy 'single vo-

cation', which is wrong-headed – but that's another article.)

And yet Altenburger says that ultimately, we're all single. We're single before we go into religious life or priesthood or marriage. Some of us remain that way or revert to it.

This makes the single life the foundation of all other states of life and vocations in the Church. As he says: "Single people are not outliers or attached patches awkwardly stitched on to the neat quilt of the Church—they are the fabric itself."

A person never leaves their 'single life' – they bring it with them. It's where they were formed in the virtues, and the vices. The single person you were is the married person, priest, or religious you are today.

If we can't help single Catholics to live faithfully, then how can we expect these same single people to become good spouses, religious, or priests? Marriage, religious life, and priesthood aren't crime prevention programs, or

the place where all your problems get fixed.

At Baptism we make three renunciations rejecting Satan and evil. We also state what we believe in. This very first sacrament is our bedrock covenant with God.

Baptism isn't just a convenient gateway to the other sacraments, or a naming ceremony. It integrates us into the Body of Christ – but for many Catholics that's the end of the process, and game over.

There's a temptation in the Church to see marriage, priesthood or religious life as another instance of 'game over' – that you've made it across the finishing line and can relax. But the reality of Baptism is that it continues to be active throughout our lives. It calls us to constant conversion – all of us.

Single people remind the Church that everyone is called to constant conversion of life. We are the most baptismal of all Catholics because we're living the foundational vocation of

every Christian. Altenburger suggests that single people in the Church make others uncomfortable because we're a sacramental – a sacred sign designed to remind everyone of the sacraments, and in this case, the sacrament of Baptism.

Sacramentals are set apart and blessed by the Church to help inspire devotion. However, they aren't effective by themselves - they're not lucky charms. A sacramental is only made effective by the faith of the person using it – their love of God, their contrition, their fervent prayer.

Single people are an asset, a sacred sign, and a powerful force for good in the Church. Losing that 'process-driven' idea of Christian vocation would help us to stop trying to tidy single people up as loose ends.

Rediscovering the importance of Baptism as an ongoing sacrament in Christian life would also help to activate that sacramental power in all of us, which would only be a good thing.

Third Order Franciscans



When people today hear of 'Franciscans', they usually think of friars, priests and nuns. It is unlikely they think of people working on a construction site, teachers in schools, doctors, mums and dads with umpteen children. In fact, the largest portion of the Franciscan Order is made up by the laity.

The Church recognises that the spirituality of the saints is not just reserved for those who give up the 'world' and join monasteries as consecrated religious. The

Church invites all people of faith to celebrate in the spirit of the saints and to live the charism of these remarkable people in their family lives, the work place, and in all of secular society.

For 800 years the Church has opened the door to everyday lay Catholics, allowing them to join an official Order of the Church and become full members of the Franciscan family. It is known as the "Third Order", or "Secular Order." Here they live the charism of St Francis of Assisi in their everyday lives, without giving up marriage, family life, careers and ambitions. The Church recognises each one of these lay members as equally Franciscan as the first order friars and second order nuns.

Secular Franciscans today strive to live a life centred on Christ. By following in the footsteps of St Francis they seek to live the gospel life in the spirit of simplicity, peace, love and respect for God's creation, humility, joy and fraternity.

The Secular Franciscan Order was founded by St Francis himself, and today is the largest Order in the Catholic Church, with around 400,000 members world-wide. It is an order precisely for those who are married, single, those with professional careers, students, the retired, young and old, from eighteen years right up until 100 and beyond.

For more information please visit www.ofsaustralia.org.au or email national@ofsaustralia.org.au

Secular Franciscan Order

Come, follow Christ in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi

WEB www.ofsaustralia.org.au

Secular Franciscan Order Australia

EMAIL national@ofsaustralia.org.au

Somascan in New South Wales

On the Feast of St Jerome Emiliani in February of this year, more than 25 teenagers and young adults from St Joseph's Moorebank made a commitment to youth ministry at their parish before family and fellow parishioners.

Somascan Father Chris De Sousa CRS, assistant priest of Moorebank parish, made it a priority to kickstart the ministry after many young parishioners expressed a desire for more involvement and spiritual guidance.

Since then, the presence of the Somascan Fathers in New South Wales has grown and borne much fruit at both St Joseph's Moorebank and at their new parish of St Christopher's in Holsworthy.

With the pandemic effecting so many people, both spiritually and physically, the Somascan Fathers have continued to live out their charism by serving the community through new and innovative ways.

Youth gatherings for both teens and young adults were moved online and regular Masses were livestreamed to hundreds of parishioners each week from the St Joseph Facebook Page.

The month of May was particularly special for the community as each

day a member of the parish lead a live-streamed Rosary in honour of Our Lady and in intercession for the Church and all those effected by the Pandemic.

The Somascan Father's annual Easter Monday Rosary, which normally takes place along Perth's Coogee Beach with youth from Somascan parishes in WA, were taken online and youth from WA, NSW and Tasmania joined in prayer.

With the lessening of restrictions these past seven weeks, Somascan Young Adults and Teens have returned to meeting each week on Tuesday and Saturday evenings whilst maintaining Covidsafe social distancing measures.

Any youth who wish to be part of youth ministry can contact the Moorebank parish office.

For more information about the Somascan Fathers or discerning a vocation with them, go to <http://www.somascan.org.au/about-us/somascan-vocations/> or contact Fr Mathew Velliyamkandathil CRS or Fr Chirs De Sousa CRS at St Joseph parish in Moorebank.



Franciscan Friars Order of Friars Minor



Friar Joe McKay

Following Christ's Footsteps

What drew Friar Joe McKay to the Franciscan Friars was their "down to earth" approach to living the Gospel. The friars he met seriously believe that Jesus was talking about a life to be lived. Inspired by the example of Saint Francis of Assisi each friar, in their own way, looked to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

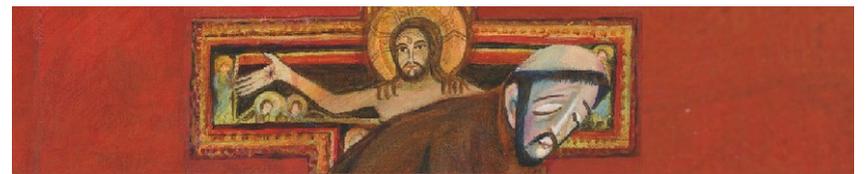
The Franciscan Friars are formally called the Order of Friars Minor. St Francis of Assisi wanted his brothers (Friar) to be servants (Minors) of God and the people around them. At the start of his vocation story St Francis of Assisi heard a call to by God to "Go, Rebuild my home!" Initially Francis thought that this was a call to rebuild the

ruined church buildings in his hometown of Assisi. It was an encounter with a leper, a person excluded from society, that helped him understand that he was called to a life of community building; building up the community of God, the Church.

St Francis understood the Church to be a community of love and mercy. He saw the celebration of the Eucharist as a transforming gift of God's self in which people are invited to part of Christ's mission to transform the whole world into the Kingdom of God.

Friar Joe's vocation journey started with a beautiful morning. He looked out the window and thanked God for the beauty of the view and asked in return "God, what can I give in return?" That night and in the following weeks came to realised that he took this question seriously. And he is still asking it!

Inspired by St Francis of Assisi, Friar Joe has followed the footsteps of Christ. This has led him from the housing commission suburbs of Campbelltown; to Singapore, Auckland, Townville & Jerusalem; to serving with refugees and homeless people; working in parishes, retreat houses and schools. He has felt supported and inspired by his brother Franciscan Friars and the broader Franciscan family, both here and overseas, to follow Christ's mission to build the Kingdom of God.



FRANCISCAN FRIARS

Order of Friars Minor

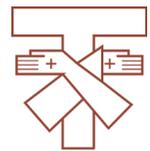
The Franciscan Friars were founded by St Francis of Assisi to preach the Gospel through humble service to all. Each are called to **Rebuild God's Church!**

We live together as a brotherhood. Each friar is called to find and use their God given gifts: some work in parishes, others as artists, lawyers, nurses, spiritual directors, missionaries, ecologists, teachers and university chaplains. We care for the shrines of the Holy Land and the "lepers" of today's world.

All are brothers, some are priests.

Connect via an online Zoom meeting to hear about the Rule and Life of the Franciscan Friars in Australia and ask any questions you may have about religious life.

ONLINE VOCATION CHAT
7:30pm Monday 17th August
ZOOM ID: 981 8587 6189
www.zoom.us/j/98185876189



The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.

Vocation Director: vocations@franciscans.org.au
www.franciscans.org.au

Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (CSFN)



csfn.org.au

"We are spreading the Kingdom of God's love among ourselves and others by living the spirit of Jesus, Mary and Joseph..."

Covenant of Love, Charism Statement

We, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (CSFN), are an international Roman Catholic congregation of religious women dedicated to spreading the Kingdom of God's love, particularly within families. We accomplish this through a wide variety of ministries: education, health care, social services, and spiritual services, including evangelisation, catechesis, retreat work, and pastoral ministry. We also spread the Kingdom through our daily living in a community of prayer and commitment to God, the Holy Family, and

to one another.

Our Foundress is Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Frances Siedliska, who started the Congregation in Rome, the heart of the Church, in 1875. Though born into a family of privilege and wealth in mid-19th century Poland, Frances hungered for a deep spiritual life that expressed itself in the radical commitment of religious life.

Strong was her desire to bring the love of Christ to any and all. She transcended ethnic boundaries, welcoming women of many nationalities into the Congregation and serving God's People in many different countries.

Today, this vision of Nazareth is being lived by 1,147 sisters serving in 14 countries: Australia, Belarus, England, France, Ghana, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Spain, Ukraine, and the United States. We are joined by 700 lay associates. Our motherhouse is in Rome.

Our Congregation has seven provinces, including the Australian province. Our Sisters have been in Australia since 1954. We have five convents in two states – New South Wales and Western Australia.

Through its members, our Congre-

We warmly invite youth (age 18-35) and families for the

Holy Hour for Vocations

ON THE FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

RSVP: SR PAULA CSFN
120 CAPUCHIN WAY
PLUMPTON NSW
2761

E: vocationscsfn@gmail.com
M: 0449 656 406

gation utilises every opportunity to reach out to all people in our efforts to spread the Kingdom of God's Love.

- Do you feel in your heart the call to continue Christ's work as a consecrated woman?
- Would you like to know more about our life?
- Would you like to help the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth carry on our ministry by joining the Associ-

ation of the Holy Family?

We invite you to check out our Facebook page, YouTube, "Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth – Australia", and our website, www.csfn.org.au, about ways in which you can join us.

We would love to meet and pray with you at any time! Most of all, we want you to know that you and your family are in our prayers every day!

Spouse of the Holy Spirit

'Bujarri Gamurruwa'

Very recently, I learnt about a young indigenous woman who was a very influential teacher of her language to the new settlers on her native soil. Patyegarang was the indigenous young woman who taught the astronomer William Dawes her language while she learnt English from him.

Dawe's notebook reveals how much he learnt from 'Patye' (as he referred to her). Because of Dawe's careful recording of Patye's language, we now have priceless resources that can aide contemporary Sydney to learn an ancient language that has almost faded into oblivion.

William Dawes holds for us a 'theodolite' that can help us focus our vision as we walk towards the Plenary Council in 2021. So much has been submitted, discussed and published about the national enthusiasm about the upcoming Plenary Council of the Church in Australia.

Lack of Identity

The Church in Australia has encountered a crisis in her own Vocation as the Body of Christ in this Land. In this edition of the Vocations Guide, I wish to propose a point of view that my role in Vocations Ministry has helped me see a pathway which I believe warrants careful reflection.

So much of what has been submitted to for consideration in the plenary Council seems to focus entirely on "what to change in the Church," "what we did wrong," and "what can we do better." While there is a place for these, I fear that the attitude that has engulfed our heartfelt desire for 'change and renewal' is an ideology that has infected contemporary society. That is, 'change in everything else except me.' Genuine *metanoia* begins in each of us as disciples.

Surveyors use a *theodolite* to measure the angle between designated visible points in the horizontal and vertical planes. Interestingly, one of the parts of the instrument is called the 'spirit level' or the *bubble level*. Carpenters/builders use it too.



A portrait of an unidentified Gamaraigal woman, possibly Patyegarang, from the Port Jackson area, 1800-1804. (Nicolas-Martin Petit, Supplied By Parramatta Heritage Office)

Do you agree that that 'spirit-level' in Australia is "off-balance?"

The issues, suggestions and submissions to the Plenary Council show evidence of a deep loss of *identity* or the lack of it. Without an identity it is difficult to discern our Vocation as the Body of Christ in the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding the Soul

In order to renew the Church in Australia we *must understand the 'soul of this ancient Land.'* This is complex and demands respect. To understand the soul of this land does not mean adapting indigenous culture into the Sacred Liturgy - far from it. This was experimented in my own culture but has been carefully refined over 30 years to its current useable form. But as a first step towards renewal in Australia, one way of *understanding* the 'soul' of this land, is to know, love and understand her language. When was the last time you greeted an indig-

enous Australian in Sydney by their local language? I am often greeted by people with a 'Bula' whether they are Fijian or not. Imagine if we were able to greet each other not just with 'G'day' but with a generous and heartfelt 'Bujarri Gamurruwa.' To understand the 'soul of Australia' is it harmful to understand how 'she' speaks? William Dawes understood Patye's soul because he learnt her words, her language and understood them and vice versa. Thus they were able to be good friends.

Herein is a second pathway to renewal. In order to renew our Catholic family here we *must understand the 'soul' of the Church in Australia.* Australia was once called as the *Great Southland of the Holy Spirit.* In addition to this by consecrating Australia to Mary Help of Christians in 1844 the Bishops of Australia connected the two creating an angle between them as a unique 'sacred lookout point' - breathtaking!

From this 'sacred lookout' I see the Church in Australia as the *Spouse of the Holy Spirit.* Just



International symbol, WYD 2008 'The Day the Holy Spirit visited Marjorie and her People' by Aboriginal Elder of the Tiwi Islands, Marjorie Liddy.

as France is known as the *Eld-est Daughter of the Church* and just as England is known as *Our Lady's Dowry*, let the Church in Australia be known as the *Spouse of the Holy Spirit.* In this the Church has a unique perspective to *renew her Vocation and Mission here in this Great Southland of the Holy Spirit as His Spouse.*

Once we accept our identity with a grateful heart, then we can tell all of Australia about the *Word that dwelt among us, crucified and risen Jesus Christ our Lord* just as Patyegarang

did about her words and language to William Dawes. Let Marjorie Liddy set us in the right direction:

"Open your hearts. Let Him in. Let Him in. He will help you to know and understand Mother Mary and Jesus. There's so much love the Lord has for us. So much love. He wants us all to love Him. To go back — to go to Mass, go to confession, and receive Him. And our love will grow, grow. But let the Holy Spirit start a new life."

Fr Epeli Qimaqima, Vocations Director, Archdiocese of Sydney

Discerning a vocation

I am 22 and trying to discern whether God is calling me to marriage or perhaps to a religious vocation. I really don't know how to go about this. Can you help me?



By *Fr Flader*

You mention that God may be calling you to marriage. That is a good way to look at it. God has a mission, a vocation, a calling, for each person. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation to young people *Christus vivit* (2019), explains: “The word ‘vocation’ can be understood in a broad sense as a calling from God, including the call to life, the call to friendship with him, the call to holiness, and so forth. This is helpful, since it situates our whole life in relation to the God who loves us. It makes us realise that nothing is the result of pure chance but that everything in our lives can become a way of responding to the Lord, who has a wonderful plan for us” (CV, n. 248).

For most people, this calling is to marriage. For some it is a calling to apostolic celibacy: in the priesthood, the religious life or in the lay state. In every case, it is a calling to holiness.

Discerning this calling is the question each of us must face. The choice is vital, since we will only be truly happy and useful in God's service if we choose what he is asking of us. The first question we must ask then is not, “What would I prefer to do?”, but rather, “What is God calling me to do?”

Pope Francis, in *Christus vivit*, says that this discernment, “even though it includes reason and prudence, goes beyond them, for it seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan

that God has for each of us... It has to do with the meaning of my life before the Father who knows and loves me, with the real purpose of my life, which nobody knows better than he” (CV, n. 280).

Since this is a very personal and vitally important matter, the first step is to pray about it, to ask God what he desires for us. Pope Francis writes: “Since this is a very personal decision that others cannot make for us, it requires a certain degree of solitude and silence... which enables us better to perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light” (CV, n. 283). In order to find this solitude and silence, it may be helpful to go away from our usual surroundings to a church or chapel, or to a monastery, where we can find the peace and quiet we need.

Pope Francis continues: “We must remember that prayerful discernment has to be born of an openness to listening – to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas...” (CV, n. 284). In prayer we must be truly open to God, not allowing our own preferences to drown out God's gentle voice.

“In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security,

but lead us to a better life. It is not enough that everything be calm and peaceful. God may be offering us something more, but in our comfortable inadvertence, we do not recognise it” (CV n. 284). As the Pope says, we must be open to a call that can “shatter our security”, setting us off on a challenging and joy-filled path. We should not simply seek the most comfortable way.

In addition to prayer, we should ask the advice of people who know us and who know the circumstances of the vocation to which we feel called. These can include our parents, our spiritual director if we have one, and especially persons already in that vocation.

We must remember that, so to speak, three persons are involved in a vocation: God, who does the calling; the person who is called; and persons in the institute or way of life to which we are called. It can be that a person feels strongly drawn to a particular vocation, but is told by those in the vocation that they are not suited to it. In that case we must accept that God is not calling us to that way of life. He speaks through those people.

And always, to be prepared for any vocation, we should endeavour to grow assiduously in holiness through such means as mental prayer, recitation of the rosary, spiritual reading, frequent attendance at Holy Mass, and regular use of the sacrament of penance. Then God's seed will fall on fertile ground where it can take root and bear much fruit.



“ Since this is a very personal and vitally important matter, the first step is to pray about it, to ask God what he desires for us.

Live the truth and beauty of God's plan

Natural Family Planning Awareness Week was on 19-25 July. The theme: Live the truth and God's plan for married love!

By Julie Asher



Natural Family Planning Awareness Week is a weeklong observance national educational campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that celebrates "God's design for married love and the gift of life and to raise awareness of natural family planning methods.

The week annually highlights the anniversary of St. Paul VI's 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life), which affirmed Catholic teaching against artificial contraception and provides clear teaching "about God's plan for married love and the transmission of life." The week also includes the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Mother.

Natural family planning, or NFP, involves the monitoring by a married couple of the various biological signs indicating a woman's time of fertility and infertility. It can be used both to avoid pregnancy or to aid in becoming pregnant.

St. Paul in *Humane Vitae* said the only licit means of regulating birth is natural family planning. In the document he asked scientists to improve natural family planning methods "providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of birth founded on the observance of natural rhythms." In the 50-plus years since the encyclical there has been an explosion of research into methods of natural family planning.

"The church's teaching on contraception is not just a doctrine that states what not to do," said Janet E. Smith, who was a professor of moral theology at the Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit from 2001 until her retirement in 2019. She held the seminary's Father Michael J. McGivney chair of life ethics from 2016-2019.

"Many people would benefit from knowing

that it is a doctrine that explains how extraordinarily important is the act of having children," said Smith, who made the comments in an article on natural family planning included in a package of articles, videos, suggested liturgies and prayers, church teaching, NFP resources, and other features available on the USCCB website.

The USCCB's Natural Family Planning Program is part of its Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

"Those who understand the church's teaching on sexuality know that to a great extent it is shaped by a concern for the well-being of any children who may result from acts of sexual intercourse," Smith said. "Children born into families where their parents are sexually self-controlled, where they are faithful, stable, and desirous of children are predictably much better off than those born to single parents, to the unfaithful, to those open to divorce or divorced."

Sixth-eight per cent of children born in the U.S. are born out of wedlock or born into households "that will fragment through divorce," she said. "One out of four pregnancies is aborted." These realities are the result of "our sexually out-of-control culture and divorce culture," she added.

Church teaching on contraception also is "shaped by a knowledge that those who become parents generally become much better people; they need to develop quite a set of virtues in order to be good parents. Those virtues also help them be good spouses, good co-workers, good citizens," said Smith, who speaks nationally and internationally on Catholic teaching on sexuality and on bioethics. She has published numerous articles on sexuality and bioethics.

"Those who use natural family planning to plan their family size develop the virtues

needed to be good parents; they develop sexual self-control and patience and generosity and they almost never divorce," according to Smith.

The USCCB materials for Natural Family Planning Awareness Week included stories from couples, like Jennifer and John Campbell, about the role of natural family planning plays in their marriage.

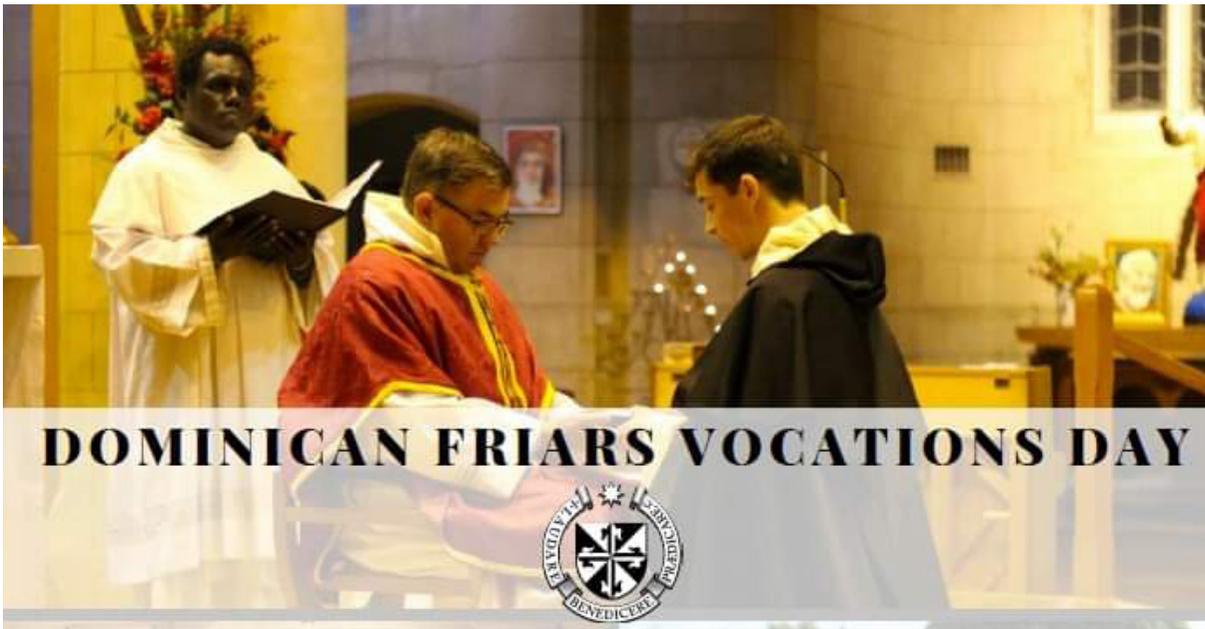
"For a newly engaged couple, learning natural family planning is informative, interesting, at times a little embarrassing, but always enlightening. Living NFP, on the other hand, is a different story," the Campbells wrote. "It is a story about connections, very unique and fulfilling. It involves the use of information learned which we then apply to the reality of everyday married life."

"At the beginning of our married life, we used NFP to avoid pregnancy, as the time was not right for it," they said. "Currently, we are using NFP to achieve pregnancy. We were delighted to find that the two focuses of NFP have made our young marriage both more focused and more intimate."

They added: "Unlike artificial contraception, which usually places full burden of family planning on the woman, NFP promotes shared responsibility of the fertility of both the husband and wife. It lends a spirit of togetherness to a marriage."

They acknowledged that natural family planning "can be a challenge and a sacrifice at times."

"We're not saying it's always easy, but that is part of true love, a bit of sacrifice for the beloved," the Campbells said. "We find a noble joy in sacrificing ourselves for each other, even in so private a way as withholding intimacy until the time is right; self-sacrifice is an important root element of love, and it builds respect for each other and ourselves." - CNS



A lecturer once gave our class of eager young law students a great piece of advice. With an enormous, tooth-filled, Hollywood smile he said: 'You're all told that you're wonderful, brilliant, clever, creative people who can do whatever you want with your lives.'

The smile vanished. 'That's a lie.' After a dramatic pause, he added: 'Not that you aren't all intelligent enough to achieve whatever it is you set your minds to; that you can.'

'But the idea that you're going to be able to do everything you want to do in your life is simply not true.'

'Some things are mutually exclusive. Some things take a lifetime to achieve. Over the course of your lives, you're going to have to shut some doors.'

He was absolutely right of course. For there is one thing that each of us is called to do.

On the broadest level we are all, of course, called to walk in the footsteps of the Master – of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is the particular manner of our journey that we must all discern.

For my part I can say that, as a professed friar in the Order of

Preachers, I believe I am living the life I was created and redeemed to live.

- A common life, shared with many brothers.
- A life of common prayer and contemplation.
- A life of study, leading to a deeper understanding of the Truth that is Jesus Christ.
- A life spent preaching the liberating Word of God.

And who could ask for more than that?

If you would like more information about the Dominican vocation, email vocations@op.org.au

Religious literacy for today's world



The most fundamental vocation is the one that comes with baptism. Living the baptismal vocation today comes with increasing challenges. Society does not foster or support Christian faith in the way it did in previous generations.

All the baptised need support in living their faith. Many people are looking for ways to deepen their faith and expand their religious and theological literacy. A theological education has the potential to give them confidence about what they believe and how to speak about it. It gives them confidence in the face of challenges to the faith. The Catholic Institute of Sydney (CIS) has been involved in theological education for around 130 years, first at St Patrick's College, Manly and since 1995 at Strathfield. Since 1954 it has offered eccle-

siastical awards approved by the Holy See (the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome); and since 1982 it has offered civilly accredited awards as a member institution of the Sydney College of Divinity. The ecclesiastical awards offered by the Institute include the five-year STB (Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology), the STL (Licentiate in Sacred Theology), and the STD (Doctorate in Sacred Theology).

Those looking to deepen their faith or to expand their theological literacy have a number of study options. They may choose a short course at graduate certificate level or a degree course. They can also choose to specialise by choosing course units in biblical studies, theology, philosophy, church history or pastoral theology.

CIS is the place of study for those with a vocation to priesthood who are at a diocesan seminary or in a religious order. Those with a vocation to the permanent diaconate also study there. Other students come from all walks of life and professions. Some are looking for professional qualifications, others are primarily taking the course for personal enrichment.

CIS cares for the vocation of all the baptised. Students study in a supportive environment where faith is nurtured and theological literacy is learnt alongside others.



JOIN THOSE CHOOSING TO STUDY THEOLOGY

A course in Theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney will allow you to delve deeply into the rich Catholic philosophical and theological tradition and equip you to live your vocation in today's world.



CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF SYDNEY
99 Albert Road,
Strathfield NSW 2135

For more information contact us: t: 9752 9500
e: registrar@cis.catholic.edu.au
or visit our website www.cis.catholic.edu.au

CIS is a member institution of the Sydney College of Divinity (CRICOS 02948J)

Siblings called to religious vocations found family support

David Langford and his biological sister, Sister Lucia Marie both seemed to have had a calling at an early age. Around the age of 10 or 11 years old, Sister Lucia Marie began telling others of her desire to become a nun someday.

By *Deb Wagner*

Siblings who feel called by God to religious vocations often say the call was distinctly individualised, but that are grateful for the support they received in their discernment from their biological brothers and sisters. Having a sibling who understands what it is to live and serve within a vocation to others is helpful.

While their parents made choices to raise them in the Catholic faith and support them in their vocation choices, several siblings in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend say they never felt pressured to pursue a religious vocation, even in the case where a sister or brother did.

Brothers Matthew and Terrence Coonan are two of eight children in their family and were ordained together June 11, 2011. They were raised at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Fort Wayne, attending school there before going to Bishop Dwenger High School. Their parents were part of a small Christian community that was important for living the faith in their family, the brothers agreed. Both benefited directly and indirectly from their involvement in it.

Father Terrence said that the parish youth group also played a “huge” part of his growth in faith, as well as the

priests at the parish. He said he was asked to consider a vocation to the priesthood in seventh grade but did not consider it seriously until he was in 11th grade and deciding between college and seminary. Four years later, he decided to go to seminary.

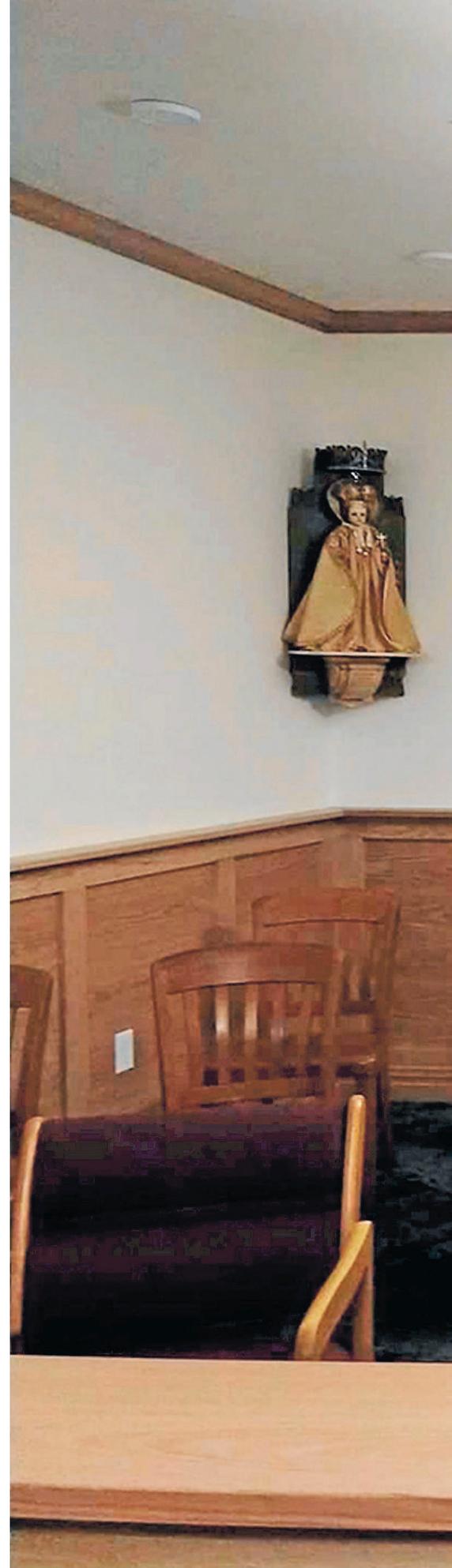
“Father Matt and I both were pursuing the Lord and building up others in the faith during those years,” he said. “He helped in youth group when I was going through it, then in college we had separate ways we were building up the Church. This was a neat way that God allowed us to grow toward our vocations together and then separately.”

The Brian and Joan Eichman family participate in the Traditional Roman Rite, also known as the Latin Mass, at Sacred Heart Parish in Fort Wayne. The three oldest daughters in the family of 11 are married and have a combined 15 children. The youngest three children – including a set of twin daughters – still live at home. Five of the children are living out a call to religious life. The oldest, Father Gregory Eichman, FSSP, is an ordained priest with the Priestly Order of St. Peter. He is currently the chaplain at Mater Dei Latin Mass Community in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Mother Mary Catherine of Christ is a Carmelite nun in Kensington, Califor-

nia. Nicholas, James and Christopher are seminarians with the Priestly Order of St. Peter. The Eichman siblings were homeschooled with a Seton Home Study School Catholic curriculum through high school and attended Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne before entering the seminary.

Nicholas said, “Some of the earliest memories I have of my childhood include waking up early for daily Mass and praying the rosary in the evening. These family practices made it very clear that the Catholic faith was the most important thing in life. This made it more natural to enter the seminary in order to see if I had a vocation. The major reason I chose to apply with the FSSP is my love of the Traditional Roman Rite as well as the excellent intellectual formation available here at the seminary. Our philosophical studies are heavily grounded in Aristotle while our theological studies are based on St. Thomas Aquinas.”

James’ older brother and sister impacted his decision to pursue a vocation. “On the same weekend in 2012, Father Eichman was ordained a priest and my sister was clothed in the Carmelite habit. I was blessed to be present at these moving liturgical events,



which signified that they were giving their lives completely to God. The solemnity of the ceremonies impressed upon me the importance of the religious vocation and the sacrifice necessary in pursuing it. Also, being able to visit Father Eichman at least once a year at the seminary and become acquainted with seminary life provided me with a solid basis for making my decision to apply for the seminary.”

Mother Mary Catherine was born simply “Catherine.” She is currently the sub-prioress of her monastery near Oakland. She entered the Carmel of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Valparaiso, Nebraska, just after she turned 18 years old. About a year later, she was

Sibling groups like the Langfords have family systems rooted in consistent Catholic living.



Diocesan seminarian David Langford visits his biological sister, Sister Lucia Marie of the Visitation, OP, in the visitation parlor at her First Profession ceremony in March. The counter that separates them is a reminder of where the contemplative life of a nun in the convent begins and ends. PHOTO: David Langford

sent to California to help start a new foundation since Nebraska was overflowing with vocations.

Christopher said the lives his older siblings live through their religious vocations was helpful in his vocation journey. "My older siblings have given me strong examples of the sacrifices and unselfishness that are necessary to conform one's life to Christ, he said. "They have embraced a life that is a folly to most people, including Catholics. This applies especially to Mother Catherine, whose life as a contemplative nun is incomprehensible to the rest of the world. They have given me

the courage to answer God's call to the best of my ability."

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend seminarian David Langford, and his sister, Sister Lucia Marie of the Visitation, OP, were also homeschooled. Sunday was devoted to family time, they said, and their father often read classic stories to them such as Lord of the Rings or Treasure Island. Another family favorite was a game of apologetics called Friendly Defenders, and they prayed a decade of the rosary and read a half-hour of the Bible nightly, as well as attending Mass three times a week.

Both seem to have been called at

an early age. Around the age of 10 or 11 years old, Sister Lucia Marie began telling others of her desire to become a nun someday.

She first visited her religious order, Dominican Nuns of the Summit in Newark, New Jersey, while visiting family nearby. She was advised to get a college degree first. While attending Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne she stayed in contact with the community, making occasional visits to them and receiving spiritual direction from Father Terrence to sort out her questions, doubts and confirmations about her calling. Her brother

is studying for the priesthood at Mount St. Mary's Seminary.

Sibling groups like the Coonans, Eichmans and Langfords have family systems rooted in consistent Catholic living. Those who were the younger ones in their families say their discernment of their vocation was inspired by, to some degree, the sibling who entered before them. David noted, "God calls who He calls, and it's easier to answer God's call when you have a supportive family."

Deb Wagner is a Freelance Writer. This article is from todayscatholic.org

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