

# THE Catholic Weekly

# 2021

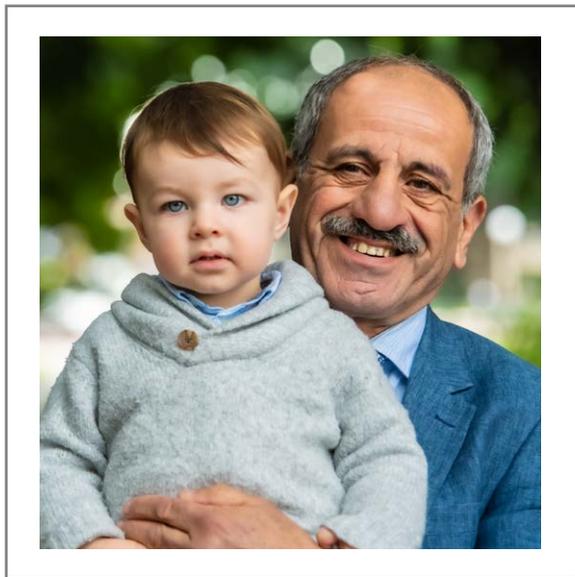
ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

*To be saints is not a privilege for the few.  
But a vocation for everyone - Pope Francis*

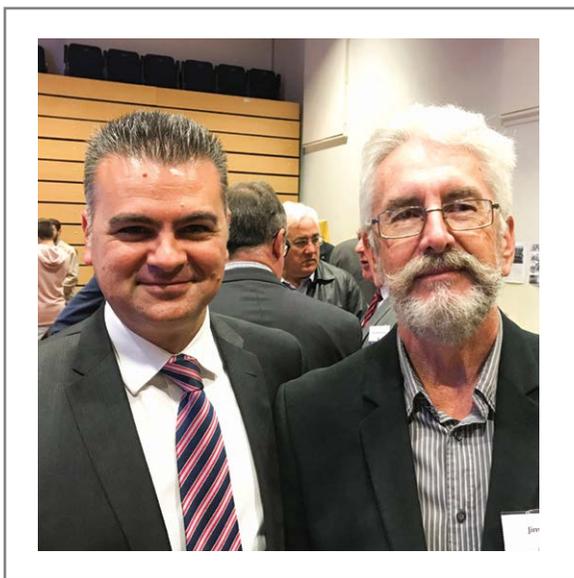
# vocations



## RELIGIOUS LIFE



## PARENTING



## TEACHING

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## FAMILY

## CATHOLIC VOCATIONS 2021

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# VOCATIONS

Women sensing the call to religious life have a range of options they may not be aware of. With more than 50 congregations for women offering everything from a traditional monastic way of life to being more involved in the apostolic work of their communities, there is plenty of choice available right here in our backyard in Australia.

PHOTO: Sr Mary Catherine, Dominican and Sr Mary Rose Disalced Carmelite



FULL STORY  
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A real Sister Act

# Teaching as a Vocation

Teachers play a unique role in the lives of our youth. This has made me reflect upon the notion of “*Teaching as a Vocation*” within a Catholic school context.

By *Frank Chiment*

In recent times, there has much highlighted in the media and professional circles about the shortage of teachers in NSW and beyond. This made me ponder upon the special and unique role teachers play in the lives of our youth. In particular, it made me reflect upon the notion of “*Teaching as a Vocation*” within a Catholic school context.

In my experience, people have entered into the teaching profession primarily because they wish to make a real and deep difference in the lives of our youth. Providing a sense of awakening and nurturing of student learning, character development and faith formation is an altruistic element that is certainly evident in the teaching profession at large. Interestingly, these motives for entering the profession are becoming even more pronounced with generations Y (27-41) and Z (12-26).

Teaching may be viewed as a calling. It is more than being an expert teacher in a learning space at school. In a Catholic school context, teachers are intrinsically connected with their students as disciples. From a holistic education viewpoint, teachers intertwine Catholic values in everything they undertake on campus – in and out of the classroom.

Teachers strive to work in partnership with students and families in order for graduates to leave the school gates as the best version of themselves and be who God is calling them to be. Some ways that this is achieved by teachers is by their great sense of generosity by attending retreats, reflection days and faith in action (service learning) projects. A critical element is also to genuinely know their students and partner with them on their school journey.

I reflect upon my own experience as a school student at a local Catholic secondary school and I’m most grateful for the many teachers who nurtured me. In particular, I think of



Frank Chiment, left with teacher Jim Olson, Frank's Homeroom teacher in year 12. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

my Year 12 Homeroom and English Teacher, Mr. Olsen. I remember him to be a caring, nurturing, funny and intellectual Catholic man. A man who connected well with me and knew what levers to use in order to get the best out of me as I graduated from school. Recently, I was privileged to meet up with Mr. Olsen at a Catholic school gathering. This was a real honour for me and my conversation with him was most memorable. Mr Olsen’s approach to holistic teaching contributed much to who I am today.

As a leader in a Catholic school, it

excites me to welcome colleagues who are new to the teaching profession. Many arrive fresh out of university and some from a career change. New colleagues commence with a sense of energy, enthusiasm, joy and wish to be in a place where the Beatitudes are not only taught, but actively lived. Above all else – they generally have a strong desire to make difference to their kids, even if they have not met them yet. Intrinsically, they get the fact that they will need to not only be a good teacher, but also be the face of God to our kids too.

The ministry of Catholic school teaching is truly special and life-giving. Teachers understand and value their partnership with parents and carer’s in nurturing the education of the heart and mind of students. As such, our Catholic schools remain authentic places of learning and formation, where our teachers are real beacons of hope and evangelisation.

**Frank Chiment is the Principal Leader at Patrician Brothers’ College, Blacktown**

# Young missionaries give thanks for their vocation



Marius Razafimandimby, Hai Nguyen, Edward Okletey Teye, Nicholas Duc, and Francois D'Assise Andrianihantana took their final vows as Divine Word Missionaries and were ordained to the Diaconate earlier this year. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

The Divine Word Missionaries AUS Province had cause for great celebration earlier this year when five young confreres from three different countries made their Final Profession of Vows and were ordained to the Diaconate.

The young men making their commitment in Melbourne were Nicholas Duc, Marius Razafimandimby, Francois D'Assise Andrianihantana, Edward Okletey Teye, and Hai Nguyen. They are from Ghana, Madagascar and Vietnam.

Francois said the two days of celebration were "remarkable and joyful" days in his vocational journey.

"Doing God's mission delights my soul, following the footsteps of Christ and Arnold Janssen our Founder gladdens my heart and becoming a perpetual member of the SVD gives me joy. I am excited to embrace my future and my mission," he said.

Marius said that as a young man flooded with today's culture of entertainment, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Netflix, he realised he also needed a purpose in his life.

"For me, what I want is to do something that makes my life more meaningful, in which I do something with consequences that matter to others.

I am very grateful to God for calling me and many young people to commit themselves to proclaim his love, in their very own way, to all. My journey has just started in the Society and I believe the best is yet to come."

For Nicholas, the taking of final vows and ordination to the Diaconate was a cause of great joy.

"I am experiencing the coming down of the Holy Spirit as Jesus gave the Spirit to his disciples and sent them to bear witness to the Good News. Perhaps in the future, there will be many difficulties and challenges. But in God's hand, with the grace of God and the support of my parents, brothers and sisters and friends, I hope that I will become a fruitful missionary to build the Kingdom of the Lord," he said.

And Hai, drew on the beautiful prayer of Mary, the Magnificat, for his reflection.

"As Mother Mary praises God for what God has done for her; I also feel that taking Final Vows and the Diaconate are great gifts I have received. I praise and thanks God for the two precious gifts. I desire to be an instrument of God for doing God's will, not for my own intention."

Finally, Edward said his religious journey has been a long wait for God's

amazing blessings and favours.

"Looking back to where I started from and where the Lord has brought me now, I say, it is just by God's grace. Trusting in God's providence, I kept my focus on what God can do for me in Christ Jesus. So, having been blessed to take my final vows and instituted as a Transitional Deacon, my song is of gratitude to God, my formators and

The love of Christ impels us

2 Cor 5:14



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everyone who helped me to come this far," he said.

The young missionaries have received their first assignments, which they hope to be able to take up as international borders open: Edward - Zimbabwe Region; Hai - Colombia; Francois - Australia; Marius - Netherlands-Belgium; Duc - USA Chicago Province.

# Marist Brothers Province of Australia



MARIST BROTHERS  
Province of Australia

On Wednesday, 4 August, as part of marking National Vocations Awareness Week, the Marist Brothers Province of Australia launched its new Vocations website, located at <http://www.maristvocations.com.au>. This new website is dedicated to providing material and resources about the life and mission of the Marist Brothers in a contemporary context, as well as materials that can assist a person discerning life as a Marist Brother.

The website is part of the Marist Brothers' faithfulness to providing resources and avenues for young people to continue to explore the possibility of a formal religious commitment in the Catholic Church.

Promoting and advocating diverse expressions of living



Marist Brothers celebrate prayer together (Left to right: Brs Michael Green, Greg McDonald, Neville Solomon, Michael Sexton, Hubert Williams).

one's vocation and discipleship to Jesus Christ, including life as a religious brother, remains an important priority of the Marist Brothers. Providing healthy and substantive processes of discernment is also an important part of supporting all people who continue to

deepen their relationship with God, and to give full expression to their vocation as a child and co-heir of God. The website provides introductory information about the Marist Brothers in Australia, including insights into the life and spirituality of the Marist Brothers, a brief his-

tory of our Founder, St Marcelin Champagnat, and information on our discernment and formation stages. The website also presents resources for education and formation settings, including three distinctive film series. The first series, "Being Marist" contain three films,

titled, "Meaning & Mission," "Community & Relationships," and "Faith & Spirituality," all of which focus on the contextual understanding of the key elements of Marist life in Australia. The second, "Characteristics of Marist Life," provide reflective resources on the nature of mission, spirituality, and community for the modern-day Marist Brother. The third series "Talking Heads" involves the Marist Brothers in Australia responding to interesting, provocative, and challenging questions about the life of a Marist Brother in Australia today.

Finally, information about the ministries that Marist Brothers founded, and continue to be associated with through the Marist Association of St Marcelin Champagnat, are also accessible on the new website.

## SOCIAL CONTACTS

@fmsbrothers

@MaristVocations

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e | [james.hodge@marists.org.au](mailto:james.hodge@marists.org.au)  
Province Vocations Coordinator

## 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 of 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.



**Catholic Institute of Sydney**  
Australia's Ecclesiastical Faculty for Theology and Ministry



## 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.



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

# 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.

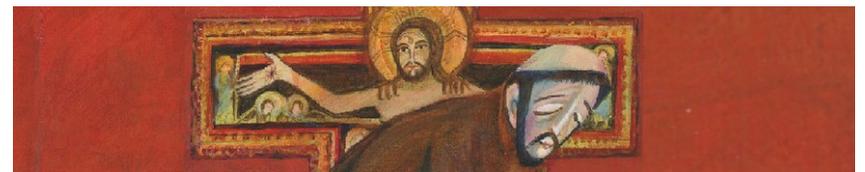
The Franciscan Friars are formally called the Order of Friars Minor. St Francis of Assisi wanted his brothers (Friar) to be servants (Minors) of God and the people around them. At the start of his vocation story St Francis of Assisi heard a call to by God to "Go, Rebuild my home!" Initially Francis thought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

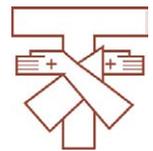
Join our Zoom meeting (www.zoom.com) to hear about the Rule and Life of the Franciscan Friars in Australia and ask any questions you may have about religious life.

### ONLINE VOCATION CHATS

7:30pm Thursday 26th Aug

7:30pm Thursday 2nd Sept

Meeting ID: 883 73608314



*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](mailto:vocations@franciscans.org.au)  
[www.franciscans.org.au](http://www.franciscans.org.au)



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# Our Aussie Bride of Christ

Former parishioner of Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill, professed her Final Vows along with five others as Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, in Nashville, Tennessee.

By *Debbie Cramsie*



**M**ariam Assaf O.P., says she has “the best spouse ever”. The former parishioner of Holy Name of Mary Parish, Hunters Hill, has just professed Final Vows along with five others as Dominican Sisters of St Cecilia, in Nashville, Tennessee.

She represents the increasingly international flavour of the community of more than 300 Sisters worldwide, including Australia, after being invited to help with the 2008 World Youth Day in Sydney.

For the girl from Gladesville, the day represented the “deep joy that comes with doing God’s will daily”.

Coming from a close Lebanese family, her vows were recited in English first and then in Arabic.

“There are no words to truly describe the day,” Sr Mariam told *The Catholic Weekly* from her new mission in Indiana.

“I am totally given to Christ and his church, and this has given way to an even greater freedom in my heart. I am all his, forever, and He is all mine, forever!”

“The day of perpetual profession

was also a very joyful day because due to COVID-19 our community had not been able to come together in a very long time!

“I very much felt the support and prayers of our sisters, my family and friends who were livestreaming in Australia, Lebanon and France, and the prayers of everyone in heaven!” The 27-year-old attended Tangara School for Girls in Cherrybrook before completing a Bachelor of Commerce at Macquarie University with majors in human resources and French.

She first encountered the Nashville Dominicans when they visited her high school and then again at Theology on Tap events, but it wasn’t until she attended a “Nun Run” for young women considering religious life that her vocation really started to stir.

After spending much of the weekend with them, she visited their Regents Park convent and was struck by a sense of familiarity.

“I witnessed true and real women, really down to earth, and they loved playing sport and they were all so different,” she said. “I just really felt like I fitted in.”

It was an important lesson for a girl who loves “spending time with family, friends, drinking caffeine, beer, basketball, starry night skies, trying to sing, languages and cuddling chubby baby nieces”.

She knew she was being called to religious life and that joining the Dominican Sisters would not be easy for her large family, so once she started to really discern, she only shared it with a few select people.

She felt the expectation of getting married and having children, however could not have dreamed her decision could give her such freedom.

And while they struggled initially with “letting go of their daughter”, parents George and Nehmat slowly felt great joy for the third of their four children.

They both agreed that while it was “heart-breaking” having their daughter so far away, her happiness was far more important.

Since leaving Australia in 2014, the devoted parents have twice yearly spent over 24 hours travelling each way just to spend 14 hours with her and once bor-

ders open plan to continue their twice-yearly pilgrimage.

“The Sisters are entitled to six visits a year but we are not allowed to spend any more than two consecutive days together so being so far away does make it very hard,” proud mum Nehmat said.

“It’s a long way for us to go just for two days but it’s so worth it, just so she knows we are always here.

“If it’s this hard for us being apart, we can only imagine how hard it is for her being over there without us and we need to put our own feelings aside and support her, although I must be honest we always have a return ticket for her just in case which makes her upset but deep down we know she won’t use it.

“We all still struggle with not being able to just pick the phone up and speak to her. She sends letters which can take months to arrive and a couple of times a year she rings us but that’s about it, it is so difficult being so far away but to be honest she is just so happy and at the end of the day that’s all you want for your kids,” she said. “Due to COVID we had to livestream her



vows and honestly it was like her wedding day.

“She was just so happy, she said ‘Mum it’s my wedding,’ the joy on her face was incredible.

“She told me ‘I have the best spouse in the world, and I really can’t imagine who could make her any happier.

“All I hope is that after starting in Nashville and then being sent on mission to Memphis and now Indiana, she doesn’t end up in Alaska,” she laughed.

With a number of Dominican Sisters now in Australia, Sr Mariam is hoping she will one day return to her home city on mission as a primary school teacher.

She advises anyone considering religious life “to live it as if it is a relationship”.

“Growing up I always thought I

would get married and have lots of kids,” she said.

“I believed that a husband would be the reason for my happiness but when I met the Sisters, I saw a joy I couldn’t describe.

“Their joy lies in none of the things that I imagined would make me happy, clothes, cars, my own home and a man. Their treasure is Jesus.

“I guess when I was out with a guy, I just couldn’t help but compare him to Jesus and think ‘this guy is great but he just doesn’t match up.”

**To find out more about the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia go to [www.nashvilldominicans](http://www.nashvilldominicans) and click on the vocations tab**

# Vocation of the Christian Home



“...The gaze of the Mother, and the gaze of every mother. A world that looks to the future without a mother’s gaze is short-sighted. It may well increase its profits, but it will no longer see others as children. It will make money, but not for everyone. We will all dwell in the same house, but not as brothers and sisters. The human family is built upon mothers. A world in which maternal tenderness is dismissed as mere sentiment may be rich materially, but poor where the future is concerned. Mother of God, teach us to see life as you do. Turn your gaze upon us, upon our misery, our poverty. Turn to us thine eyes of mercy...”  
 Pope Francis (*Reflection on Mothers, 22nd March 2020*)



By *Fr Epeli*

God and to be saints. The current demise of our society will soon make us forget that human life is created to be more – not just to be vaccinated in order to purchase goods, services, go to work, or travel. One of the visible signs of a healthy and free society is seeing children happy in the company of their mothers in the parks, beaches, picnic sites, at drive ‘thru’, to and from school, to and from church or at playgrounds etc.

At the core of a mother’s vocation is one of prayer. Prayer is the flame that signals the presence of God’s love in the home. This blooms in communion. We live this communion with God as Christians by praying in communion with one another.

This begins first of all at home. This is one of the many good things that God is drawing out during from this pandemic. Families are beginning to pray more together and spend quality time together. If we remain steadfast in this, then we will be able to serve society more effectively in the future with new enthusiasm and hope.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, let us implore God to bestow on all mothers many graces, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the constant protection of the Queen of Heaven and the delights of the saints.

We are created in the image and likeness of God. This means that we are created for communion. The vocation of Man is Communion. For Christians, this is where the vocation of Christian Mothers in particular play a pivotal and immeasurable role. Christian mothers have an irreplaceable role as vessels of communion in the home and in society.

Discerning one’s vocation during these times is very demanding. Normal routines have been so disrupted by restrictions and more. Working from home can be stressful, and at times frustrating if the Wi-Fi connection is not fast enough, or the neighbor is renovating next door while you are in a zoom meeting etc. With uncertainty for the future and the possibility of extended lockdown’s and restrictions, it means longer isolation from other people and our usual way of life. What

should we do? Who will guide us?

**Look to the home!**

There is a vocation that we need to draw insight and example from during times such as this. For as long as humans have walked the earth, the role and place of a mother has been the spine that holds the structure of the human family together. I do not want to differentiate here between working mothers and what contemporaries call ‘home-

makers.’ I want to honor all Mothers in this edition of our Vocations Guide.

*Working from home is not something novel or unique for our mothers. Mothers and their vocation in motherhood is an image of the Church our Mother. A mother’s vocation is her life. Her life is her work! Her work is her home! Her home is the harbor where her children and spouse find safety and joy!*

Good citizenship begins in the home. It is there that mo-

thers nurture their children with good habits, graceful example, sound teachings and virtue. A mother’s love is always genuine and sincere especially when she has to decline an ‘overrated’ demand for more milk or attention.

**Learn from Mum**

Christian Mothers have a particular mission in the Church and in the world. A Christian Mother is a teacher of holiness in the home. She labors to raise her children in the ways of

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*"Put out into the deep"*

**LUKE 5:4**

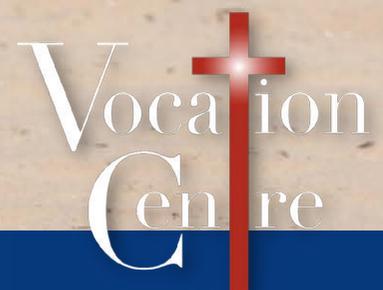


**HOLY MATRIMONY**

**CHASTE SINGLE LIFE**

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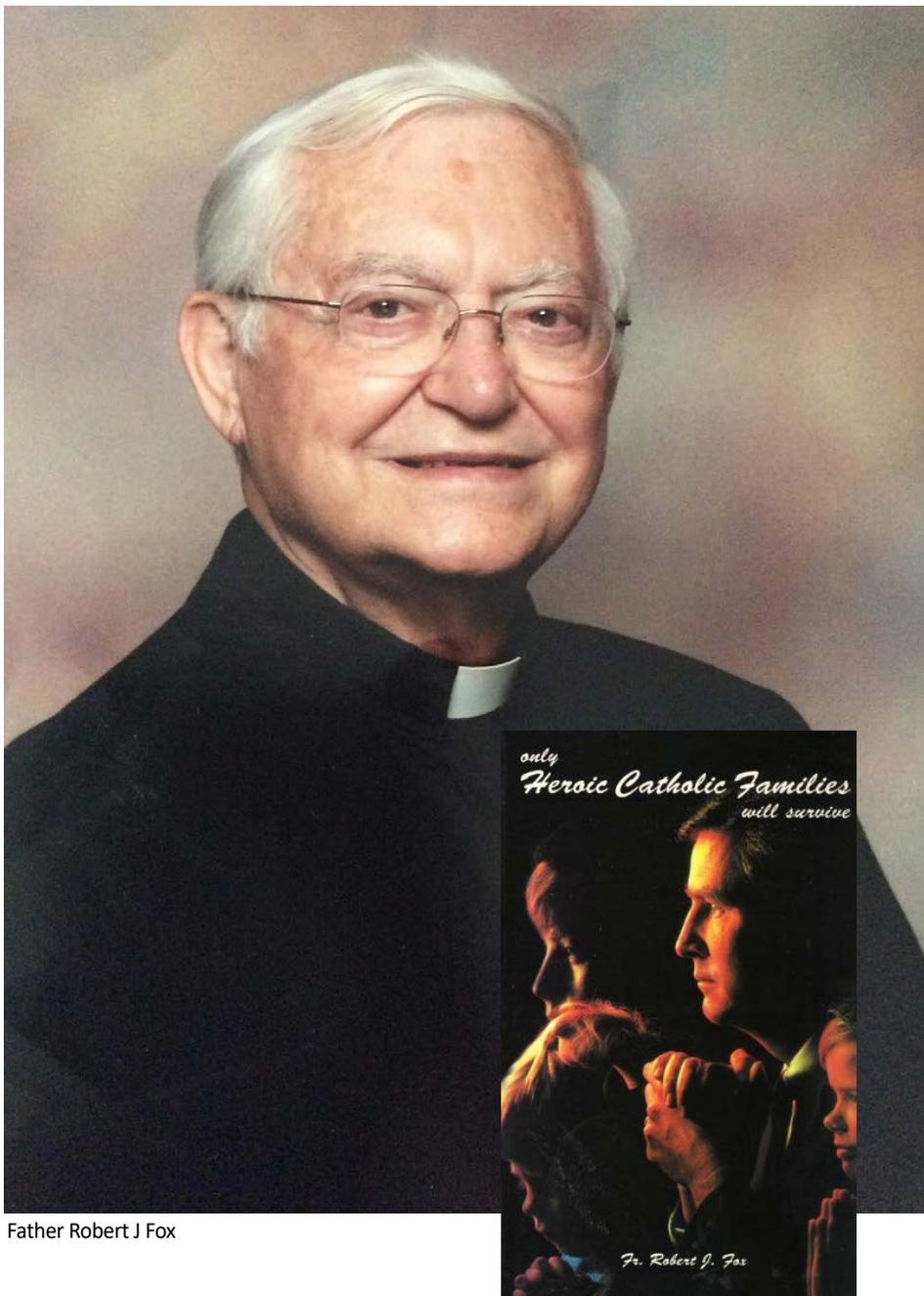
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# The Vocation to everyday heroism in the midst of Family Life

It certainly isn't easy to be a parent at this time in history and we can attest to the fact that it takes an ongoing and intentional focus to keep our families on the path towards holiness and human flourishing.

By *Steve Buhagiar*



Father Robert J Fox

In 1993 and in a local parish hall in western Sydney, the late American priest Fr Robert J. Fox gave a fascinating presentation wherein he recounted his numerous visits behind the 'Iron Curtain' in order to spread the message of Our Lady of Fatima to a Russian people who had undergone decades of de-Christianisation. I was there that day with my wife-to-be and his stories of secret meetings and underground Masses, often at the risk of imprisonment, captured our imagination and left us wondering if we would have the courage to do the same if we found ourselves in similar circumstances.

This question was especially relevant in light of the book which Fr. Fox had at that time just authored and which was entitled, "Only Heroic Catholic Families will Survive". I bought the book because of its striking title and the concrete challenge it posed just as I was about to embark on the exciting adventure of marriage and family life.

As I reflect on 28 years of married life and in the midst of an unprecedented lockdown where lack of access to the sacraments draw real-time parallels with communist Russia, I am realising afresh the critical importance of Fr. Fox's call for an intentional heroism lived in the current uncertainty of contemporary family life.

We can describe a 'heroic' person as one who makes great efforts in challenging times and where the call to act with courage, determination and with an ear for the Truth, is imperative. I am going to be so bold as to state that these truly are the essential characteristics which

the families of today are called to attain! It certainly isn't easy to be a parent at this time in history and we can attest to the fact that it takes an ongoing and intentional focus to keep our families on the path towards holiness and human flourishing.

So what to do? What is at the heart of this everyday heroism? Amongst so many other ways to answer this question I would suggest that, at its very core, it is to live a life of virtue. Virtue. A word deemed quite unfashionable in a world where "my truth" is as relevant as "your truth". Virtue. Positively, a word which has been the absolute foundation for countless saintly persons through history who strove to know, serve and love God and their neighbour as themselves. I'll move forward, therefore, in the sure accompaniment of this latter understanding!

The 'cardinal' or 'hinge' virtues of faith, hope and charity are a good starting point. So often it is around the standard of faith that the striking figure of heroism rises or falls. The key choices of yes or no, do this or shun that, have to do with what "I believe" and what I am prepared to stand up for in light of faith. It is a real heroism and a sometime white martyrdom which safeguards this great gift given in Baptism and which parents are called to transmit via an inherent responsibility which carries eternal ramifications.

The example of a parent striving to live virtue is paramount! Here a life lived in love and self-gift provides a beautiful foundation of heroic endeavour. Our children learn more from what we do than what

"We DO fall sometimes in our role as parents and leaders, but the challenge then is to be determined to get up, name our failing, and seek in an intentional manner to be 'holy' once more."



Image: Patricia Prudents/Unsplash

we say. They are always watching and taking on-board our responses to the stimulus of life. They are taking in what they see to be our priorities. They are sensitive to the moments when we are 'counter cultural' and when we make a stand on principle. They recognise that as parents we are striving to live a life of caritas in light of the truth. They recognise the moment of heroism when it comes as surely as they do our mediocre response in matters of substantial moral bearing. It is through our example that we form our children's heroic and moral edifice that is so very much required in a culture that is relative in the face of truth and sometime hostile to the objective nature of morality.

We have to admit that these challenges are real and not easy to live up to in daily life. And the reality is that we DO fall sometimes in our role as parents and leaders of our families. The challenge then is to be determined to get up, name our failing, and seek in an intentional manner to be 'holy' once more. Holy... another unfashionable word! However, this is exactly what Jesus calls us to do. "Be holy as your Heavenly Father is holy." Pope Francis understands this reality. He tells us in *Gaudete et Exsultate*: "Our path towards holiness is a constant battle. Those who do not realise this will be prey to failure or mediocrity." No holding back here from the Pope!

At the same time Pope Francis

puts forward the means by which we can sustain this daily striving to lead our families heroically and on the path of encounter with Jesus. We do well as families to take to heart the following means by which Pope Francis encourages us to live out the particular heroism called for in our own day and age.

He states, "For this spiritual combat [read heroism], we can count on the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us." The pope then lays out his spiritual weapons of choice:

- Faith-filled prayer
- Meditation on the word of God
- Participation in the Mass
- Eucharistic adoration
- Sacramental Reconciliation

- Works of charity
- Community life
- Missionary outreach

The challenge is ours to take up, integrate, and fruitfully utilise this foundational and heroic arsenal into our family lives. It WILL be difficult and oftentimes even counter-cultural to assimilate these spiritual habits into the life of the domestic church for which we, as parents, are responsible to God for. But in doing so and in light of the far reaching lens of eternity, our society will certainly thank us for forming our children into the super-heroes so very much needed in this challenging time in history!

# Another Chapter in the life of Daniel Magadia (msc) Master's student



By *Daniel Magadia*

One of the many insights I gained from my formation journey so far has been the importance of reflection, noticing the moments of growth, consolation, and even difficulty. As I dive into another semester of theological studies, I guess it is ideal for me to do that exercise again.

I might as well start by briefly reflecting on my time in novitiate last year. To use the analogy of a novel, the novitiate was a significant chapter of my journey as an MSC. I consider myself to be extremely privileged to be given that opportunity. The novitiate was a cherished time of entering deeper into the life, spirit, and mission of the congregation. It

was also a year of growth and maturity in terms of how I understand myself, my prayer life, and my relationship with Jesus, the beloved son of God (an identity I share with Him).

Also, how lucky was I to be situated at Douglas Park during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Detachment and isolation were already elements of that year, disregarding the virus. Fast forward to present, I am now professed, and have moved on to another chapter, another stage of this rollercoaster ride that is religious life.

Returning to Blackburn was coming back to a place that is familiar, but within an unfamiliar context. The Daniel (or Iyel) that once stayed here two years ago was different to the

***"One of the many insights I gained from my formation journey so far has been the importance of reflection, noticing the moments of growth, consolation, and even difficulty"***

one who returned late January, as mentioned earlier. I may be residing in the same room as the pre-novitiate, but the surroundings, in some ways, are different. I have both old and new housemates. Of course, there is the "new normal" of

the post-COVID world. But as Frank Dineen msc would often label the place, Cuskelly House is still paradise. By the way, it was good to resume cooking for the community again. And goodness me, some of the Filipino ingredients I left two years ago are still in the pantry. Thankfully most of them are not out of date.

The big addition to post-novitiate life for me is studying Theology again. This is one of the things I was excited for since finishing my time at Douglas Park. I have heard great things about YTU from confreres who either learned or taught there. Upon the entering the quaint but hallowed grounds of Yarra Theological Union, I was first captured by its tranquillity. It felt like enter-

ing a monastery, with its courtyard, which unsurprisingly has a sculpture of St Francis. It was at marvelling at the simplicity and beauty of the place where I was introduced to YTU's mascots, the adorable guinea pigs. It is an environment conducive for learning.

As for the people that make YTU, there is a warmth, and sense of community among the lecturers and students. A notable quality is its diversity. I have classmates from across the globe, representing a variety of religious congregations. Last semester I was the lone MSC student; but this semester I am joined by my brother, Trieu Nguyen, who just finished his ELSPM course.

I did three units last semester, covering different fields of



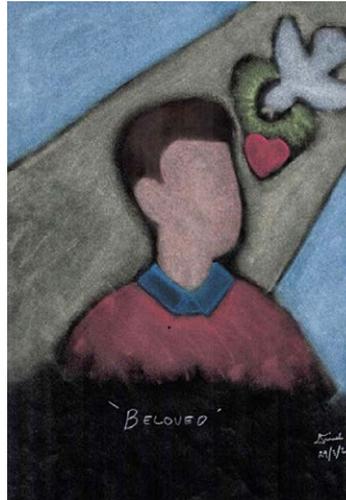
Theology. I found the classes fun and engaging, and I learned so much. I considered myself lucky that the last semester was not affected too much by the coronavirus, with all sessions face-to-face. Though I must confess, studying at Master's level was intimidating, especially with their big assessments. It tested my energy, and my ability to stay organised and disciplined. The moments of insights, stress, and even procrastination, were opportunities for growth.

It also tested my religious life, especially regarding prayer. To use another analogy, I was so used to juggling a certain number of clubs. The addition of another item meant returning to re-practicing juggling, and adapting to the new

situation. I feel that I am more prepared for this second half of the year.

As for highlights, there are many. Some that are worth mentioning include the many walks through parklands to class, witnessing the final professions and ordinations of schoolmates, cheering at the Brotherhood Cup, and finishing the last 4000-word essay for my lecturer and community leader, Philip Malone (which signified the end of the semester).

Aside from studying, this first half of 2021 was also occupied with pastoral work. One of my commitments this year is teaching Catechesis to children preparing for first reconciliation and communion. One definite fruit from this experi-



Can you see your face in this picture?  
A drawing by Daniel.

ence is a greater respect of primary school teachers.

Relating to past pastoral experiences, teaching is a contin-

uation of this ongoing lesson on the importance of simply being. There were moments where I doubted myself. Am I just wasting the children's time? That is why I am thankful of my confreres at home, who remind me of that valuable insight of presence before I drive off to Keysborough. Aside from that, being a Catechist has been fulfilling and fun. Looks like my experience in Antioch and youth ministry did come in handy, especially with games.

Another placement was briefly helping Geraldine Lee, and her ministry to people in housing commission, drug addicts, and those suffering from mental illness. There were moments that were confronting, but likewise it was also ful-

filling. She has a drama ministry, which was amusing to take part in.

As I embark on this second half of 2021, I look forward to more memories, challenges, and discoveries, accompanied by the love and support, and the banter and laughter of my brother MSC's. **Bring it on!**

IMAGES: Daniel is symbolically and officially welcomed by his formator Khoi Nguyen msc at the doorway of the Chapel, far left. Signing of documents during the Rite of Profession, above, with Celebrant Fr Chris McPhee msc (Provincial), Daniel Magadia to his right and Trieu Nguyen to his left. Witnesses are Fr Tony Arthur msc (on Daniel's right) and Fr Michael Fallon msc (on Trieu's left).



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# World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly

As the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly draws near, Sydney mums praise their parents. Parenting is a challenging gig, but it's certainly made easier with supportive grandparents, says Marthe Azzi.

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By *Marilyn Rodrigues*

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**T**he Sydney mum says that she and her “awesome husband” Charlie consider themselves blessed that both sets of grandparents are willing and able to regularly help with the care of their daughters, two-year-old Emilia and six-month-old Natalie. Marthe, a doctor, is currently working towards a PhD while Charlie is a busy graphic designer with the archdiocese’s Sydney Centre for Evangelisation.

Their parents, Henri and Afife Chehade and Marie and Wadih Azzi (both ‘Tata and Jedo’ to their grandchildren), are not only often involved in Emilia and Natalie’s daily life but also pass on many of the faith traditions and wisdom that underpins the loving extended family.

“They pray with the girls and teach them many of the beautiful rituals of our Maronite Catholic tradition. We are so fortunate that they are able to care for our girls when Charlie and I are both at work.

“I know that many grandparents would love to do the same but circumstances don’t allow them to. But for us it’s a great privilege, it gives our children the opportunity to develop their own relationship with their grandparents in-



IT’S A GREAT PRIVILEGE, IT GIVES OUR CHILDREN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR GRANDPARENTS”

dependent to us. It also brings us closer to our parents and in-laws too.”

I’m very aware I’m very blessed and not everyone has the same support in the challenging work of parenting. But I can’t ask for better circumstances, we are surrounded by a supportive circle in our family, friends, and workplaces.”

Simon and Madeleine Carrington agree that the role of a grandparent is “irreplaceable”.

The parents of Joseph, who turns two next month and four-month-old Thomas say they feel blessed that their parents play an active role in the children’s lives.

“They are also a point of support and encouragement for us in our journey as parents,” Madeleine added. “Our children delight

in the love from their Nannu and Nanna (on both sides) and we know our parents’ lives have been enriched because of the love and joy our children bring to them.”

Campsie couple Chantal and Piotr Czczotko named their children, one-year-old Antoni Tadeusz and four-month-old daughter Maria Danielle, after all four of their grandparents.

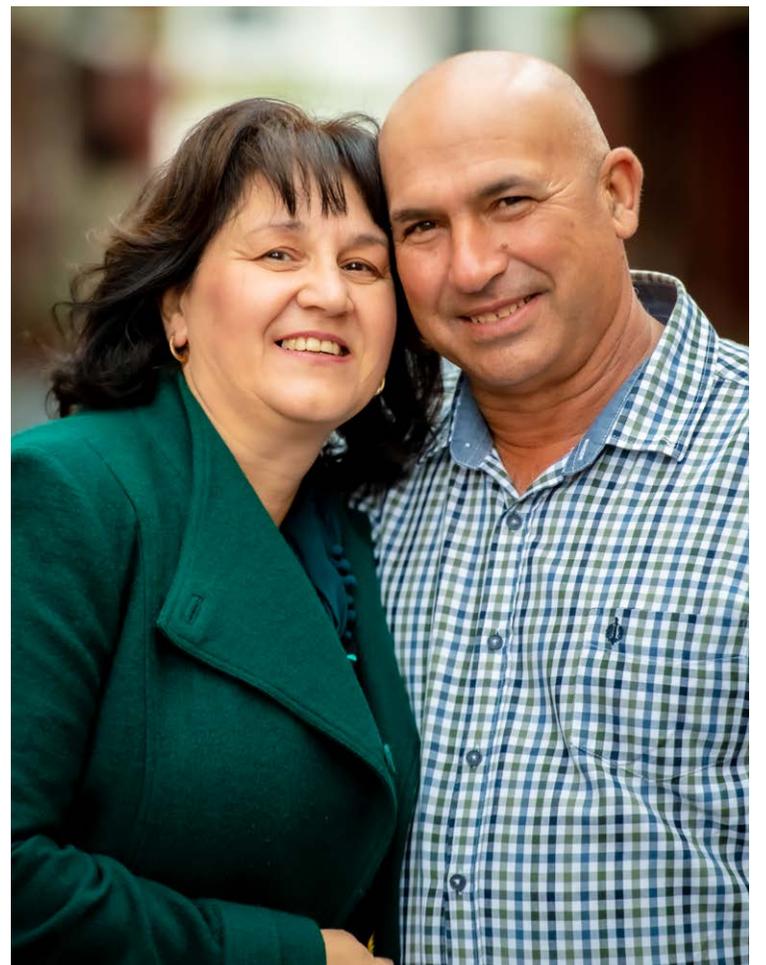
“It wasn’t out of any sense of obligation, but we both just felt so blessed by the parents we’d been given that we wanted to name our first boy or our first girl after them,” Chantal said. Piotr’s parents, Maria and Tadeusz, live in Poland and last visited Sydney for Antoni’s baptism just before the first COVID pandemic border closures.

Chantal said they have been a “phenomenal help” for the young family who keep in touch with regular phone and video calls, while Maria as a paediatric doctor is always the first ‘go to’ person the moment a health or medical worry arises.

“Even from such a great distance the children can feel the incredible love and care their ‘Babcia’ and ‘Bziadbk’ have for them,” Chantal said. Her own parents Anthony and Danielle Khoury luckily live a short drive away and are happy to act as babysitters or just spend time



IMAGES: GIOVANNI PORTELLI



with the little ones doing things Chantal remembers her grandparents did.

Steven Buhagiar, team leader of the Life, Marriage and Family Office said parents are increasingly turning to grandparents for support due to the increased pressures of the pace of life we live in places such as Sydney.

“This provides wonderful opportunities for parents to have welcome input into the lives of their grandchildren, despite also knowing that they have to allow the parents to be parents,” he said. “One of the greatest gifts a grandparent can give is to pray for our chil-

dren and grandchildren. As a grandparent myself it is most reassuring to remember that whatever happens we can always make that contribution.”

This year Pope Francis instituted a Church-wide celebration of a World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. It is one of the initiatives of the Year of Amoris Laetitia Family, (19 March 2021-26 June 2022), which was launched by Pope Francis on the feast of St Joseph this year, to be held close to the liturgical memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

THE YEAR ON FAMILY LOVE

*Why we need to embrace the year on family love*

The year on family love, technically called Year "Amoris Laetitia Family," will conclude on June 22, 2022. The family "deserves a year of celebrations, so that it can be placed at the centre of commitment and care from every pastoral and ecclesial reality."



**A**fter the announcement of the Year of St. Joseph, which began 8 December 2020, and lasts until 8 December of this year 2021, the Holy See made a related announcement on the Feast of the Holy Family. On 27 December 2020, the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life promulgated another special year: this one to "bear witness to family love."

Beginning on the feast of St. Joseph on 19 March, which is also the fifth anniversary of the signing of "Amoris

Laetitia," a postsynodal apostolic exhortation on marriage and family life published in the wake of two synods that took place in 2014 and 2015 -- the year on family love, technically called Year "Amoris Laetitia Family," will conclude on June 22, 2022. It will culminate with the occasion of the World Meeting of Families 2022 in Rome.

According to the dicastery's announcement, the family "deserves a year of celebrations, so that it can be placed at the centre of commitment and care from every pastoral and ecclesial reality." It added that the year

"aims to reach every family around the world through several spiritual, pastoral and cultural proposals that can be implemented within parishes, dioceses, universities, ecclesial movements and family associations."

In celebration of the year, the dicastery is encouraging five approaches: that the content of "Amoris Laetitia" be more widely shared; that the sacrament of marriage be proclaimed as a gift that contains the "transforming power of human love"; that families be enabled to actively evangelise and catechise their own members from within; that

young people are made more aware of "formation in the truth of love and in the gift of self"; and that outreach be extended to all members of the family, from young to old, in all walks of life. In all ways, it is seeking to extend and promote the message of family life found in Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation.

"Amoris Laetitia" is not a controversy-free document. Much has been made of Pope Francis' seeming pastoral accommodation regarding the availability of the sacraments for the divorced and remarried in one of the document's footnotes, and there will be some who



**Michal and Angelika Steciak and their children, 19-month-old Peter, and 11-month-old Mary, are pictured in a 11 July, 2021 photo at their home in Rembieszyce, Poland. The Steciak family was named the 2021 International Family of the Year by the Knights of Columbus during the fraternal order's virtual convention 3-4 Aug. (CNS photo/Maciej Maziarka, Knights of Columbus)**

will immediately dismiss this year and its opportunities because of it. Yet despite the pages upon pages of analysis written about paragraph 351 and its accompanying annotation, to ignore a concrete opportunity to focus on, encourage and strengthen family life, especially during this time of pandemic, would be detrimental to the mission of the church.

Indeed, while "Amoris Laetitia" may have its challenging passages, the exhortation is, as the Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board wrote in 2016, practical, accessible and "highly effective ...

for encouraging and inspiring couples and families in the trenches of everyday life." It is, we said, "rich in practical advice and conveys a real understanding of humanity in all its successes and failings." We added that the document "will be effective in offering support to couples and families and in renewing and sustaining their efforts to live as Christ intends."

Five years on, as the challenges facing family life have become more acute, these statements remain true. For decades now, the number of people getting married in the church has become few-

er and fewer, and the decline extends to the number of children who are baptized. Many of those who do get baptized are not well formed in the faith, and we know that by the end of high school, many of them will have left the church. In recent years in this country, we also have seen the redefinition of marriage and the elevation of a cultural idea of gender over biological sex.

Faithful, well-catechised families are critical to the mission of the church and can help to reverse these trends. Within the family, the Gospel is lived out and passed on in word and in deed. Voca-

tions are introduced. Virtue is nurtured. This most basic cell of society is where the faith can flourish, if it is properly tended to. And if there's anything the coronavirus pandemic has taught us about family life, it's that most of the time, we're not giving it proper attention. As COVID-19 has forced us to slow down and be together, we are reminded that building up our domestic churches should be a priority.

This is the potential that the Year "Amoris Laetitia Family" brings with it. May we allow it to be a blessed time. - CNS



“No vocation is born of itself or lives for itself. A vocation flows from the heart of God and blossoms in the good soil of faithful people. Did not Jesus say: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”

- Jn 13:35

<sup>THE</sup> Catholic Weekly