

## E-BULLETIN #132

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*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

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item 250

### a monologue with the sons of Zebedee

Dear disciples, **James** and **John**, from the Gospel accounts I realise that you both have a very close and compact family, blessed in many ways.



Your father, Zebedee, comes across as a hardworking and enterprising fisherman who owned at least one fishing boat and employed more than one worker. You both laboured along with your father who built up a successful family business. Some think that your father supplied fish to the high and mighty in Jerusalem and also owned a house in that capital city, maybe even personally knew Caiaphas, the High Priest.

Your mother, Salome (?), wanted you both to climb up the ladder of power and position. You both enlisted her support and entreated

of Jesus a privileged position in His kingdom.

It is heartening to see that you both had a very healthy relationship with your father and had a very personal and persuasive closeness to your mother. She must have been a very courageous woman, to walk up to Jesus and make that request for her sons.

To some extent I feel envious of your closely knit family, both really fortunate and blessed to have had such a healthy childhood enjoying the loving presence and caring support of parents. Looking at my life, my father was a hard working farmer but depressed after the untimely death of his wife and my mother. I wasn't even two months old when we lost her. Now you know why am I a bit envious of you!

Yet I am glad for you that you had a happy family and a healthy childhood. The Lord must have liked your hardworking, ambitious, and forthright approach to life. No wonder he groomed you both to be a part of his inner circle along with Peter. Despite the Lord denying your request, you both stuck with him as he helped you to grow and to see the stark realities of life. He helped you both and you cooperated with him. And as a result, your relationship with the Master grew closer and deeper.

Once along with your Master, on your way to Jerusalem, when the inhospitable Samaritans blocked your Master's way, you wanted fire from heaven to come down and set them ablaze. As I look back to into my own past, I have had multiple instances where I was intolerant towards people and to ideas which were opposed or even different from mine. And I made known my intolerance through rough words and rude actions. I brooked no opposition...so much for me!

On a number of important occasions you were both there with your Master – when He raised the daughter of Jairus, when he experienced the glory of Transfiguration, when you witnessed his agonizing hours in Gethsemani. You never, even in your wildest dreams, thought that your desire to sit at the right and left of your Master would take you to Gethsemani and Calvary, did you!

Though Jesus, your Master, had turned down your request, you became neither angry nor depressed. Otherwise you wouldn't have followed Him. You would have rather left him. You both accepted His call and followed Him for over three plus years.

And your approach to life changed. I am amazed at the way you both followed him to Gethsemani and accepted the tragic realities of Calvary. You grew by leaps and bounds out of your initial unbridled ambition. You both grew out of your inclination to violence in the face of obstacles and opposition.

Looking into myself, though close to becoming a seventy year old priest, my growth is rather stunted, my dreams are still infantile, and am often addicted to and stuck with my selfish ambition.

I want to grow up like you even in these sunset years of my life. I want to go through – and grow up through – my Gethsemani and Calvary and to experience and enjoy the bliss of Transfiguration and Resurrection.

Lord Jesus, You never ever scolded them for their raw ambition and the indignant intolerance of their youth. Instead, you accepted them patiently and helped them grow by challenging them to drink the cup, the cup of suffering. And they did!

Lord Jesus, while you were patient with them just for three plus years, in my case you have been accepting of me and been patient with me for well close to seventy years! Incredible indeed!

While James and John kept growing up fast, my growth is still at a snail's pace! While they grew from being ambitious disciples into ardent apostles, I am still struggling to be a disciple! That's most of me!!!

Lord Jesus, thank you for being patient with me all through these years of my life. As I look back innumerable are the occasions when you have shown immense patience towards me. Time and again you have been very patient with my unbecoming behaviours. You continue to be patient with me even now. You haven't given up on me have you? I know you haven't!

It makes me humble and challenges me to keep growing at a faster pace. I had better speed up as I am in the last lap of life....I shall...

Lord, now I wish to spend some time in silence and listen to what you want to say to me. Surely you must have a lot to tell me? "Speak Lord, Your servant is listening".



Dear disciples James and John, after listening to the Lord I want to listen to you as well...keep telling me your story of your transforming growth.

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item 251

## I'm an ordinary sort of person...

**I'm an ordinary sort of person and that's how I find God; disguised in the ordinary of my life. That's my vocation too – helping others to recognise God in their ordinary.**

At some point in my early teens, just when I was discovering there was more to the opposite sex than beneath-my-notice little brothers, I fell in love with God. Which is why, aged 16, wearing a fetching little hat and my first pair of high heels, I left my weeping parents and chuffed off to be a nun.

While the rest of my class prepared to be nurses, teachers or secretaries, I was one of the chosen ones! In the terminology of the day, I had a vocation. Nobody questioned it, least of all me. In the family photo album there is a shot of my mother and me taken the day of my first vows. There I am, all flowing black and white, my 18-year-old face encircled by a stiff coif, and there's my mum in a smart, tight-fitting suit, spike heels and red nails.

That picture captures something of what I understand about vocation. It's a trust in something way bigger than the imagination can capture. In its first heady romantic moments it makes light of the cost. That's why my mother's spike heels and red nails didn't stand a chance against God. Vocation is not about the **what**, but the **Who**.



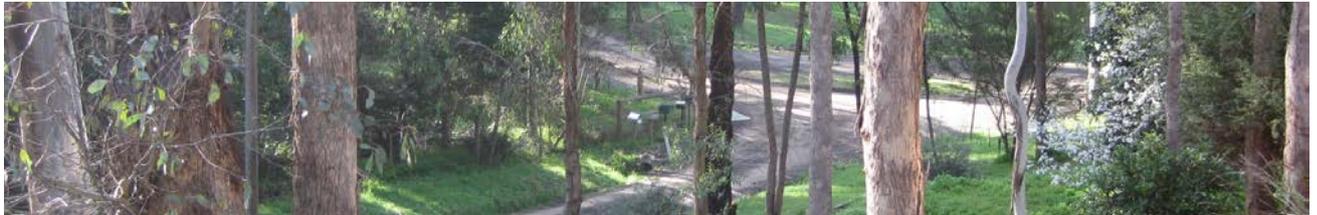
My God-dream carried me through teacher-training and 12 years on Aboriginal settlements. I survived sand fly bites, the heat and living in communities of three or four women. I loved outback teaching and something about the wide open spaces of the Northern Territory touched a place in me that I didn't yet know was there. But by my early 30s, I knew it was time to take me and my vocation somewhere else.

A Michael Leunig cartoon says, "You can't lose the plot; it's stuck to you!" So is vocation – God's plot, if you like. I thought I'd left my vocation along with my neatly-folded habit. What really happened was that it took a back seat while I earned a living teaching grade fours, learnt to drive and discovered the joys of shopping.

God waited for me to catch up. Years of formal morning meditations hadn't exactly honed my love of Scripture. A semester of Scripture studies did. I realised that I loved teaching and now I loved Scripture too. So I combined the two in a Good Samaritan venture called the Motor Mission, taking the Gospel and sacramental preparation into Government schools and after-school classes, as well as writing for "Let's Go Together", a diocesan religious education program. God had a finger on my creative bent and I found that exciting. As Jeremiah said, "You have seduced me Lord..." (Jeremiah 20:7).

In my spare time I met Terry. Marriage followed but the longed-for babies didn't. We placed it in God's hands, and God answered with the gentle suggestion that maybe we could look outside the square. We did, and one unforgettable weekend, three shy children, siblings, in need of permanent care, came to enrich our lives and leave my 'anything-for-a-quiet-life' husband wondering what marrying me had got him into.

Within a couple of years they were joined by first, one baby girl, who died in early infancy, then another, both of them gifted to us by brave young women who knew they were unable to care for their child. Now, many years on, their children call me Nana.



I knew that being a wife, a teacher, a mother, was vocation in itself, but Vatican II had blossomed into a multitude of possibilities for women and men who meant it when they called themselves Church. So I waited and listened and worked behind a counter. Before his increasing weakness was eventually diagnosed as MND (Motor Neuron Disease), my husband had followed his dream and bought a country store. It wasn't my dream, but teaching catechetics in that small tourist town eventually led to my 17 years as a parish pastoral associate (PA).

Once the parish recovered from the shock that I was Mrs, not Sister, I settled in as a PA, leading Gospel discussion groups, writing inclusive liturgies, co-ordinating the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) and having fun with "Ripples", a family based religious education program. The opportunity to participate in a two-year program called "Siloam", culminated in my accreditation as a spiritual director. My seductive God was at work again and Sophia Circle, for women who wanted to explore their spirituality, resulted.

Terry had died, the children had left home, and suddenly it was time to retire. In an inspired gesture, my youngest brother offered to build me a website as a combined birthday-retirement present. And so Tarella Spirituality was born. Now writer is added to my biographical details.

I'm an ordinary sort of person and that's how I find God; disguised in the ordinary of my life. That's my vocation too – helping others to recognise God in their ordinary. It means deep inner listening, lots of waiting, being silent enough to hear God gently whispering invitations and challenges, learning to take risks even when your loved ones don't understand. And it will never make me rich.

And so my love affair with God goes on. Next... ?

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## sac asia oceania e-bulletin

### you commented...

**on #131** Your "Bulletins" arriving loud and clear EVERY Sunday morning. Great to hear of the good news of The Philippines and our new Mission there. Gracias

JC 03.08.14