

Carmelite Monastery  
52 Halswell Road  
CHRISTCHURCH 8025



5th February 2019

Dear Brothers, Sisters, family and friends,

*"Go within his gates, giving thanks. Enter his courts with songs of praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name!"*



Silver Jubilee of Profession  
1994-2 February-2019

How well these words from Psalm 99, which was beautifully sung by Cantor, David Black at the Responsorial Psalm for the Jubilee Mass, reflect my thoughts of much joy and gratitude to God, for the support, encouragement and generosity of my community, our Bishop Paul Martin SM, Emeritus Bishop Basil Meeking, priests and Religious of our Christchurch Diocese, family and friends which was shown on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of my Religious Profession.

It has been a truly grace-filled day for me and for all who were present for such a colourful celebration. The weather was fabulous, just right not too hot then the week before and was just cool enough for the visitors from Samoa and especially the Australians who were experiencing heat waves before they came. The Week before the jubilee I spent time in the quiet solitude of the desert in prayer and reflection. I was reflecting on the mercy of God and the great gift of my vocation, my life as a Carmelite. The preparation was about celebrating HIM, God's love, His faithfulness, His call on such a fitting Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and The World Day of Consecrated Life, 2nd February. There were some interruptions but they did not take me out of my retreat mode because the retreat is all about God and the graces He wills to give so even the interruptions He gives even more to the hermit unexpected surprises. Where did the time go; the retreat went so quickly and I came out on the 27th January.

The next day, Monday 28th, the family started arriving in Christchurch from Wellington, Auckland, Palmerston North, Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne Australia and from Samoa and some of the friends and Classmates from California, USA and around New Zealand. During Christmas preparations lots of friends in the parish and around the Diocese got to hear of the jubilee and wanted to know what they could do to help. One of the most helpful preparations was to find accommodation for the large number of family members coming from everywhere. For most of them it's the first time to Christchurch and their joy of coming together for a few days was a real reunion. Thanks to Stacey Skill at the Girl Guide centre who was able to host almost 40 of them and some of the friends who were visiting them. The excitement of being together as a family, the laughter and the noise they made while visiting, made one sister knock at the visitor room door with big smile on her face and jokingly say, to tell my family the police are coming. One of the funny things they experienced being together was my sister Maria being the first to arrive, welcomed them with a Maori Powhiri with her boys to the Girl Guides Centre which really amused my relatives and every morning she rang the bell in the Centre to get everyone to come to Mass. Some of the family members from outside Christchurch seeing on their face book page what was happening in the family here in Christchurch they just hopped on the plane after Friday work and arrived here at night to be here for the day. Extra special was the presence of the many Protestant relatives and friends from around Christchurch and beyond.

Friday 1st of February was the build up of the atmosphere of excitement with the family and friends helping cleaning and decorating outside the Church and Marquees with streamers, flags, banners, with white and blue balloons. One of our hard working friends Pio Leala spend the week, tidying and mowing the front paddock to use as the car park as the parking area was to be used for the marquees for the overflow and for the food and the space for the entertainment. All little jobs related to the Church were completed and done before the Day by Bruce McBride our builder. Paul and team were in and out checking the sound system, our painter Bryn Williamson finished other painting jobs in the Church and in the monastery and also came to the party by helping shifting furniture's and any job for the next day. Then came the beautiful, cloudless sunny Saturday of the 2nd February Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and of the World Day of Consecrated Life.....I leave here this space to our friend Jenny McPhee for her version, she is the reporter for the Inform and NZ Catholic paper:

*A festival of love and Pacific Island drum beating music and dancing, rang out over the thick stone walls of the Carmelite Monastery in Christchurch, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee (25yrs) of Sister Marietta Agnes of Jesus OCD on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and The World Day of Consecrated Life. The heavy iron*

gates were swung open to welcome 35 family members from around the world, followed by more than 350 friends, youth groups and parishioners, many wearing beautiful Island dress, all carrying a special place in their hearts for Sister Marietta. The place was colour with blue and white balloons, flags and streamers decorated by the proud and excited friends and family of Sister the day before.

A local Girl Guide Centre was set up to help accommodate the many visitors. There was much merriment and laughter as Sr Marietta's sister Maria (Samoan from Wellington who were first to arrived in Christchurch.) and her two boys welcomed their New Zealand, Samoan and Australian cousins and family members, with a powhiri, 'Hare Mai' and a vibrant Haka, a tribute to the teaching in our schools of Maori Culture.

At the Solemn Thanksgiving Eucharist Celebration each visitor was welcomed with a laie of paper wrapped chocolates or sweets laced together with gold ribbon or flower garland. At the start of the Service Megan Emery OCDS president of the Secular Order of Carmel gave a warm welcome to the Most Reverend Paul Martin, Bishop of our Christchurch Diocese, the Principal Celebrant, Principal concelebrants Emeritus Bishop Basil Meeking and Monsignor Brendan Daly assisted by 13 other Priests, the family and friends of Sr Marietta. Among the guests was the local MP Honourable Dr Megan Woods. Fr Chris Friel, did a great job as the Master of Ceremony so that the celebration went so smoothly. A touching moment at the Penitential Rite, her 2 sisters Maria and Monika processed up with a Fine Mat and handed over to the 2 white veil Sisters Anne Teresa and Anne Mary, they both covered Sister Marietta who knelt close to the Grille while St James, Samoan youth choir gently sang the penitential hymn in Samoa. (In the Samoan Culture they have something precious called a 'finemat'. If a crime is committed against another family the offending family will carry out an 'ifoga' - an act of public confession of their sinfulness. The one who has offended most will be covered with a fine mat. It is a plea for forgiveness, an act of humility, of atonement and restoration of good relationship and for peace in the future. ) The Bishop then sprinkled Sister with Holy Water and the fine mat was uplifted.

Bishop Martin spoke of the dedication of Jesus saying " This is why it is appropriate today on this feast of Jesus being brought to the Temple, that we each recall the dedication and grace of our own baptism. The baptism and profession of Sr Marietta Agnes of Jesus ocd and in union with the whole Church on this feast day celebrate The World day of Consecrated Life"

The Catholic Youth Music Team with the help of David Black, led the singing helped by the St James Samoan youth choir for the congregation that overflowed out to the marquee with the screen to view the Mass that was set up for the occasion. At the end of the Mass Sister Marietta was presented with the Papal Blessing by Bishop Paul followed by the Prioress, Mother Elizabeth who read out the message of congratulations and blessing from the Superior General of the Order Fr Saverio Cannistra ocd on the occasion of Sr Marietta's Jubilee. Sister Marietta spoke of gratitude to all present for their loving, generous support of her and her sisters for the last 25 years of her religious life and she quoted the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians that was read at Mass "God has called you and he will not fail you." Sister Marietta recalls God's faithfulness and He had never failed her in these 25 years and she believes God will never fail those who ask her prayers.

The renewal of Sr Marietta's vows, and those of Religious Sisters, Priests, and Brothers present was followed by the cutting of the magnificent 3tier lit up cake by Sister Marietta in the visitor room and a delicious lunch. St Michael's Cathedral youth group, St Anne -Woolston, St James - Aranui, Tongan youth and the Indian Jesus Youth Group and other family groups, sang and danced, entertaining a happy group of people who were reluctant to leave by late afternoon.

Early recollections of life as a child in Samoa, (Number six of eleven children) were of helping her Mother Lesina and Father Tuliatu Liulevaega Penese after school with their work of laundry duties for the SMSM Sisters Vaimoso or lawn raking and ball fetching on the little tennis court were rewarded by the sisters with gifts of lollies or Book reading by one of the Sister under a breadfruit tree. Sr Marietta's father went on to supervise the painting of schools, Churches and hospital in Apia and around the Island, for the S.P.D.C. (Special Projects Development Corporation) Her Parents were care takers of the Convent and the School property. The family attended daily Mass and as a child before receiving Holy Communion, she had the joy of staying close to her Mother after she returned to her seat from Holy Communion, filled with recollection, closed her eyes in prayer where she felt the presence and wanted to remain close to her mother clinging to her clothes. The desire to become a Carmelite and accept God's special calling came after reading the life of St Therese of Lisieux she picked from the library (Sr Mary Peters SMSM was the librarian) when she was at St Mary's College Vaimoso. Present at the Jubilee Mass were some of her classmates and her school teacher at primary school and at College her name sake Sr Marietta Parsons SMSM and some of her Sisters.

Well I must bring this to an end as it seems the blessings and joys of the jubilee continue on in our community this week; the celebrations of the Chinese New Year for Sr Mary Teresa, now NZ Waitangi holiday and birthdays and more Sisters celebrating anniversaries. Now slowly recovering and many Visitors gone and decorations put away so here I am. Thank you once again from the bottom of my heart for the many Masses and prayers offered the marvellous cards, letters, donations and touching gifts

wrapped with much love and care. Also special thanks Fr Rafal Wilkowski OCD who obtain the Papal Blessing and Fr Generals Blessing in a very short notice, our Digital Media team Jason McTague and Alex Chia, our graphic designer Daniel Ho who produces colourful posters in different sizes, to Joy and Ian McKenzie, Tony Gorman and Dunstan Fernando for the transport and other gifts for the visitors, for the greeters and ushers of the day, to all the Youth groups and family and friends who provided the lunch and prepared flowers, laies and the wonderful entertainment watching from the video. May God bless and reward you abundantly. You remain always in my prayers and that of the community,

Your ever grateful/Faafetai tele lava!

Sister Marietta Agnes of Jesus ocd







**Before and During Mass**



**Posters and Decorations  
In and outside the Church**



**Blessing and cutting  
of the jubilee cake**



**Mother Elizabeth and the Jubilarian  
beside the Papal Blessing holding  
her jubilee candle**



**Bishop Paul with the people  
at the Marquee after Mass**



**Performance from the  
the Methodist Matua family**



**Jubilarian's sister, Maria with Bishop Paul  
background Sr Theresa of the Beatitudes**



**Item from St Michael  
Cathedral Youth**



**Item from St Anne-  
Woolston Youth**



**Item from the Indians  
Jesus Youth  
Christchurch**

**Item from  
the Ilallo family**

