



FROM THE HEART

NEWS FROM THE LAITY OF THE CHEVALIER FAMILY AUSTRALIA

December 2023

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Greetings! Welcome to the final edition of 'From the Heart' for 2023.

As we prepare for Christmas, we are faced with sometimes conflicting messages. Messages of hope in the new life of the birth of Jesus mixed with messages encouraging us to concentrate on buying more and eating more than we need!

Clare's excellent reflection, 'The Home of My Heart,' reveals these conflicts. As publishers of books would say, "It's a must to read". Send it around to others!

The organising committee for the Philippines Assembly has been working very hard to prepare what I know will be life-changing for those attending. Included below is the prayer that we are all encouraged to say.

As you already know, we have been raising money to support not only our delegates to the assembly but have, through your generosity, been able to send \$15,500 to support delegates from the Asia Pacific region. Thanks for your support!

Once again, this issue has many great articles to read, so enough from me.

But, one last thing: if you are a 'Facebooker' or an 'Instagrammer', Aidan has prepared a beautiful, thought-provoking Advent calendar – also to be found on our [website](#).

Happy reading! May you have a safe and peaceful Christmas.

Take care, and with every blessing,
Fred Stubenrauch (Chair, Australian Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family).

OOPS! Save the date for our gathering next year, 20 to 22 September 2024. More details later!

Share 'From The Heart'

- Download From The Heart ([December 2023](#)).
- Join the mailing list by contacting aus.lcf@gmail.com.

The Home of My Heart

[Read](#) the Christmas Reflection by Clare Johnson on the beautiful spirit of Christmas - the 'home of our hearts' that is love and always with us.



IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

As the strains of the cheerful, idealistic Christmas song echo around me, my heart questions the reality of its message - is it really the most wonderful time of the year? Christmas is a special and pivotal time. As Christians, it's when we celebrate the sacredness of life, personal connections, and the incarnation of God in the birth of Jesus. It's when we recognise that God becomes human and, by doing so, becomes accessible, relatable, and able to reach our hearts in a relational and transformative way. Yet, the lived experience of Christmas time can sometimes take us away from that singular truth - a loving God living with us. Instead, the brokenness of the world and ourselves can intrude through financial difficulties, loneliness, conflict, illness, strained relationships, grief, and more. We can be overwhelmed and stressed with expectations, pressures, and busyness. We lose the beautiful spirit of Christmas - the 'home of our hearts' that is love and always with us.

THE HOME OF MY HEART, A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

Women's Retreat Highlights

We thank Alison McKenzie (Laity of the Chevalier Family) and Anne McAtomney (Chevalier Institute) for sharing their wisdom at the women's retreat 'Awakening to Awe's Embrace' on 17-18 November 2023 at St Mary's Tower, Douglas Park. It was an opportunity for women to reflect on awe within themselves and the world around them. See highlights and reflection below.



AWAKENING TO AWE'S EMBRACE WOMEN'S RETREAT

ST MARY'S TOWERS, DOUGLAS PARK
17-18 NOVEMBER 2023



AWE IN THE ORDINARY

"Holiness comes wrapped in the ordinary...
Life wants to lead you from crumbs to angels,
but this can only happen if you are willing to
unwrap the ordinary by staying long enough in
it to harvest it's treasure."

*'A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary',
Macrina Wiederkehr*



LIFE REVIEW

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with
your one wild and precious life."

'A Summer Day', Mary Oliver



INNER AND OUTER WORLD

"Each one of us is the custodian of an inner world
that we carry around with us. Now, other people can
glimpse it from the way we behave, the way our
language is, and particularly the way our face and
eyes are. But no one but you knows what your inner
world is actually like, and no one can force you to
reveal it until you actually tell them about it."

*'Walking in Wonder - Eternal Wisdom for a Modern World',
John O'Donohue*



OUR BIRTHRIGHT IS TO LIVE RICH AND FULL LIVES

"...Your heart will at times get broken by loss, failure, defeat, betrayal, or death... What happens next... depends on how your heart breaks... If it breaks open into greater capacity to hold the complexities and contradictions of human experience, the result may be new life. The heart is what makes us human."

'Healing the Heart of Democracy', Parker Palmer

BLESSING AS YOU PREPARE TO GO BACK TO YOUR LIFE

"That you will go into the heart of God and find the heart of the world. That you will go into the world, and find the heart of God."

'Sanctuary of Women', Jan Richardson



"Reframing life to find awe and beauty in the ordinary was comforting and inspiring."

"Prioritising myself was a gift. As was the life-giving company of other women who shared themselves."

Clare Johnson



AWAKENING TO AWE'S EMBRACE
WOMEN'S RETREAT



Chevalier Family Dates

[Read](#) about significant dates for the Chevalier Family in December.

Chevalier Year Newsletter

Read the [November](#) and [December](#) editions of the Chevalier Year Newsletter.



First Friday Reflection

Download the First Friday Reflection ([PDF](#)) ([Image](#)).



Australian Reflection

In this year's journey through the *Laudato Si'* Goals, we have reflected on ecological economics and living simply, caring for Creation, ecological virtues and spirituality, climate change and carbon literacy, *Laudate Deum*, poverty, and 'the poor'. We have learned from science and faith, explored the reality of life in Australia, and contemplated what 'being the heart of God on Earth' is calling us to in response.

As we finish the year, let's look back on the First Friday Reflections and consider the following:

- Was there a topic that touched you and why?
- What did you struggle with and why?
- What changes have you made or are you considering making?
- What conversations have you had or actions have you taken?
- Where have you seen the heart of God? Where have you been the heart of God?

International LCF Council News

International Assembly Prayer

We ask you to continue to pray for the Assembly using the Assembly prayer.



International Council General Secretary Nominations

[Read](#) the letter regarding the accepted nominations for the International Council General Secretary.

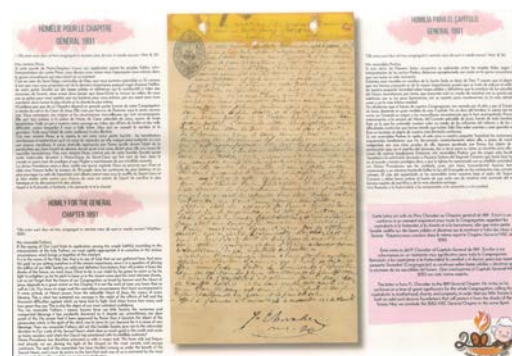
Christmas Reflection

[Read](#) the Christmas Reflection from the International Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family.

Jules Chevalier's Homily

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" ~ Matthew 18:20

[Read](#) the homily given by Fr Jules Chevalier at the 1891 General Chapter in Fr Chevalier's own hand and the translation in three languages. It was given to Laity of the Chevalier Family by Fr Abzalón at the close of the 2023 MSC General Chapter. The International Council encourage you to reflect on the words of Fr Jules Chevalier and their implications for us as the Laity of the Chevalier Family.



MSC Education News

Mark McGinnity (Director of MSC Education) is resigning early next year. The MSC Education Members' Council is now seeking expressions of interest for the position to commence towards the end of March 2024. [Read](#) the EOI document. [Read](#) the news story. [Read](#) the resignation announcement letter.



Heart of Life Newsletter

[Read](#) the December edition of the Heart of Life Newsletter.



OLSH Staff Spirituality Day

[Read](#) about the OLSH Staff Spirituality Day in this month's *Community Contribution*. These lay people work for the OLSH Sisters in many ways, including Provincial support, building and maintenance management, health and wellbeing management, nursing, overseas aid officer, mission officer, finance management, Hartzler Park conference and retreat centre management, and essential housekeeping.



Ametur Newsletter

[Read](#) the latest edition (351) of the OLSH Associate's Ametur Newsletter.

MSC General Bulletin

[Read](#) the special MSC 26th General Chapter edition of the MSC General Bulletin.



CRA Christmas Message

[Watch](#) the Christmas Message from Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), which features Sister Philippa Murphy (OLSH Provincial Superior).

Call for Contributions

The *Australian Council for the Laity of the Chevalier Family* is looking for contributions to social media stories and *From The Heart* to help build connections in the Chevalier Family.

- Are you hosting an event?
- Do you have a story?
- Do you know of an achievement?

Anything related to MSC, OLSH Sister, and MSC Sisters communities, missions, ministries, and lay people that would interest the wider Chevalier Family. Whether a local item or something of national/international significance, send a reflection, article, short paragraph, or sentence with any photos/images (with permission to be publicly shared) to aus.lcf@gmail.com.

Fundraising

The *Australian Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family* has committed to raising funds to support two delegates from Pacific Countries and four from Australia to attend the 4th *International Assembly of the Laity of the Chevalier Family* held in the Philippines in 2024. Your contribution is one way to express solidarity as part of the Chevalier Family. Download the [Fundraising Appeal Letter](#).



Australian Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family



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chevalierlaity.com.au



With deep respect and love, we acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (the traditional custodians of this land) and their Elders - past, present, and emerging.

We support the *Uluru Statement From The Heart* and recognise the importance of ensuring First Nations people have a voice in Australia.



We commit to a "*greater love for our Creator, each other, and the home we share*" (*Laudato Si* 14). We live in the *Spirituality of the Heart* and are called to love and care for Creation and the Created.



We rejoice in our differences and celebrate the gift of the LGBTQIA+ community. We live '*to be on Earth the heart of God*' and welcome and include all people in their diversity.