



SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN AUSTRALIA



BY KATEY NORMAN

Renewal Ministries Team Member

Katey Norman is a proud Stratford, Ontario, native, and graduate of Franciscan University of Steubenville. She is currently finishing her master's degree in theology. She and her husband, Steve (pictured below), moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, with their two children to be on mission and serve the Lord with Renewal Ministries. Katey is the Director of Discipleship for Be Love Revolution and has over fifteen years of experience working in ministry.

This past January, my husband Steve and I were blessed to travel to Armidale, Australia, on behalf of Renewal Ministries to work with the Immaculata Community, a religious community made up of religious sisters, brothers (including one newly ordained transitional deacon), and lay people whose mission is to bring Christ to the people of Australia and to invite them into their call to evangelize. Each year, the community puts on a school that serves to equip members of the Church with a renewed understanding of life in the Trinity, love for neighbor, and the call to invite others into a life of deep, unwavering faith. Participants come from all over the country to receive, including families, couples, individuals, and priests. Ralph and Anne Martin were in Australia for a previous evangelization school a few years ago, and the sisters and the brothers visited us in Ann Arbor last year. We are really happy to continue the relationship with this wonderful community.

The theme for the school this year focused on the "Heart of the Father" with the core message coming from a quotation from St. John Paul the Great:

"We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father's love for us . . ."

The Immaculata Community seeks the Lord's voice and will in everything they do, and the fruit of that abandonment to Jesus was powerfully revealed throughout the course of the week. Over 500 people were gathered for the school this year, and the community created a schedule that allowed



for varying opportunities depending on state of life, age, and vocation. In addition to the teachings, there were many occasions for prayer each day, including Mass, Adoration, morning prayer, and the rosary.

Our daily schedule included giving talks, offering prayer ministry, and ministering to people one-on-one. I was able to spend significant time talking with young women about the adventure of following Christ and allowing Him to be the center of their lives. I spent several days praying with some younger sisters in the Lord who were ready to give their lives completely to God. Steve's week was filled with ministering to many people with a particular emphasis on serving the men attending the school. We both were able to lead small groups throughout the week, as well. Every waking moment of the day, people were hungrily seeking God.

In the middle of the school, ensuring grounding in the Holy Spirit, stood Mother Mary Therese, the foundress of the community who has worked tirelessly in serving the Lord since the inception of the order in 2008. The foundation of the order is to live under the banner of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady and seek spiritual revival for those they serve and the country of Australia at large. Mother's vision and heart for the people who attended the school mirrored our Blessed Mother's love for her children. This bedrock of faith and service was evident in the entire religious community as they daily poured themselves out to bring Christ to the people gathered. The charity of the community is quickly bearing fruit as the order is growing with many young vocations.

The newly appointed Bishop Peter Murphy joined us for a large portion of the week, giving talks and ministering to his people. We were also blessed to build friendships with many priests who attended, several of whom are from the Sydney area. These men have a profound desire to see the Church built up in their country. We are excited to continue to grow these relationships.



Members of the Immaculata Community and lay people of all ages gathered for the annual Immaculata Mission School in Armidale, Australia.

During the week, there was a great desire for catechetical teachings. Australia is a country much like my own native land of Canada—its origins are Christian but with a deepening culture of secularization. As a result, the Church in Australia has a growing need for formation opportunities and the ability to gather as a community. The school provided much needed renewal for those gathered and an opportunity to be filled with the hope, freedom, and glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

One moment that stood out to me was on our final evening serving with the community. We offered prayer ministry several evenings during the week, and on the final night, as people hungered for the Lord, we ended up praying in prayer teams for close to five

hours. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was tangible. Men and women were being brought to Jesus and his healing power. Addictions and relationships were healed, faith was restored, and an overwhelming sense of peace and joy covered the school as people received the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This entire opportunity left me with a deep hunger to continue my part in the “yes” that Renewal Ministries has given to the Lord in its commitment to bringing the Gospel to the world. Australia is a country with incredible opportunity for continued conversion and transformation. He is doing mighty work in our brothers and sisters who are underneath the banner of the Southern Cross, and we are excited to participate in what our Father is doing there.

Bishop Peter Murphy, the Bishop of Armidale, and priests of his diocese brought the Blessed Sacrament to the participants of the mission school.

