



Lynne Crilley

In her own words

Reading the Signs of the Times: Sr. Lynne Crilley's Justice Journey

Sr. Lynne Crilley of the Presentation Sisters, Wagga Wagga, shares a powerful reflection on her lifelong commitment to justice. Formed in the spirit of Vatican II and Nano Nagle's charism, her journey spans decades of advocacy—from supporting First Nations peoples and Pacific climate activists to working with survivors of human trafficking.

Rooted in faith and compassion, Lynne's story reflects the heart of IPA's mission.



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HOW DID MY JOURNEY BEGIN?

The Second Vatican Council invited us to read the signs of the times. In the words of *Gaudium et Spes* (The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) :

“The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” (Article 1)

The charism of Nano, of which I also experience as reading the signs of the times. The Gospel invites us to bring the good news to the poor.

I was a young Sister in the years following Vatican 2. The Documents of Vatican 2 were a strong part of my formation. The world was changing: The Vietnam War, Peace Marches, Women’s Rights, Land Rights for Australia’s First Nations peoples, the Civil Rights movement in America, Refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war-torn South East Asia. Television and World news came to the Convents!!

The evolving story of IPA began in the 1980s and in 1988 was formalised when the IPA came into being with the three foci of the Rights of Women and Children, Care of the Earth, and the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples being identified as areas of advocacy at the United Nations.





MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES AND MOMENTS

- Attending a course in Human Rights and Advocacy training with Edmund Rice International in Geneva with Ann-Marie and other like-minded people working in Social Justice. It was very special to view the original document of the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (1948) held at the United Nations in Geneva.
- Working with other members of religious congregations who came together at the Edmund Rice Centre based in Sydney. We engaged in Advocacy with federal politicians in Canberra about how global warming and rising sea levels are effecting the daily lives and cultures of Pacific Islanders
- Supporting a recent Referendum on including reference to First Nations Peoples in the Australian Constitution, which failed. As Wagga Wagga Presentation Sisters, it is meaningful for us to express our commitment to being part of a nation where all feel included and respected. One of the ways we do this is to fund a young First Nations Academic to continue their teaching and research. This means that more students are exposed to indigenous culture and learning which we hope will translate into a better informed and tolerant society. (The photo below shows the present young academic Maeve Powell with the leadership team)
- As a member of ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), I contributed to raising awareness of modern slavery in Schools and Community groups. I was also involved with a Companionship Programme supporting survivors of human trafficking to live their everyday lives.
- And finally, being a member of IPA Justice Contact Focus Groups and hearing about the grassroots ministries, Presentation Sisters, and their communities are engaged in around the world was a wonderful learning experience, which I shall miss. It is amazing how much support and advocacy for local people and awareness raising of their human rights is being done. I also valued bringing information about the three focus areas from my own grassroots geographic area of Australia and the Pacific Regions to these meetings.





ASPECTS OF THE IPA MISSION THAT HAVE RESONATED WITH ME

As a member of ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), I have been glad to see our UN Advocacy focus on the elimination of violence against women and children being present.

Because I live in Australia and through my membership of a group under the umbrella of the Edmund Rice Centre called THE INTERCONGREGATIONAL VOICE ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE PACIFIC, the IPA Call to Care for the Rights of the Earth in this Oceania part of the world is important to me. We have had connections with Pacific Island climate activists from Kiribati and Tuvalu and supported them to come to Australia for training to speak on the world stage, eg, at the United Nations and COP meetings. Because of rising sea levels and global warming, Pacific islands are very vulnerable to losing their lands and their culture.



WHAT CHANGES IN AREAS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE HAVE I WITNESSED?

At the grassroots level, groups of religious Sisters and Brothers saw needs and began to raise awareness in spaces where nobody else was active, eg, raising awareness that human trafficking, forced labor, and forced marriage do happen here in Australia. Advocacy work on this issue with the Federal Government through the Attorney General's Department has meant that Visa definitions have been revised. The Australian Federal Police now works closely with ACRATH if they become aware of specific needs, so that we can support them. Awareness of issues around Forced Marriage receives attention now from the media and the courts.

The Federal Government in Canberra has appointed a Modern Slavery Commissioner, and the State of New South Wales (where I live) also has one. ACRATH has been part of driving this change. ACRATH also has a well-developed Companionship Program supporting survivors of Human Trafficking as they navigate everyday living following trauma.

Governments all over the world have become very harsh in dealing with displaced people, especially asylum seekers, my Government included. Wagga Wagga Presentation Sisters continue to advocate on their behalf and work with like-minded groups supporting asylum seekers.



MESSAGE OF HOPE

My message of hope is that small changes and sometimes big ones can come through “staying the course”! Taking time to reflect on our ministry experiences moves us to a new place. Finally staying connected to a group of like-minded people makes a big difference.

FAVOURITE QUOTES

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And further:

- “At all times, the Church carries the responsibility of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, Article 4)

As Walter Brueggemann, Old Testament scholar and theologian, reminds us:

- “What God does best and first is to trust us with our moment in history. God trusts us to do what must be done.”

I offer my deep appreciation to all who have been involved in the work of IPA. May you be blessed as you continue your ministry.

Thank you.

Lynne Crilley

Presentation Sisters, Wagga Wagga

