

# Now A Nun of Love!

—Now enjoying the liberty of God's law of love, after 12 years in a Catholic convent!

From Lydia "Nun" Atlanta; Indonesia:

**GBY! THIS MAY 16TH, 1981 I TURNED 40 YEARS OLD!** So I just made it into the "Over 40s Club"! Ha! The Lord gave me a little poem on it: They say, "Life begins at 40!" When you can still be sexy! You say yours began at 50! When you founded the Family! I say mine began at 30!

When the Family founded me! **CERTAINLY THE THING THAT DISTINGUISHES MY TESTIMONY** is that before I met the Family I spent 12 years in a Convent as a Catholic nun! (As far as I know I'm the only girl in the Family with such a past history, but if there's someone else please write—I'd love to hear from you!) Otherwise, I was like most of the rest of us before—a lost, lonely little sheep looking for the True Fold.

**I FEEL THAT MY REAL LIFE DIDN'T BEGIN UNTIL I MET THE FAMILY** in 1972 when I was 31 years old, but I had a lot of time to wait before that, many years in which I'm sure the Lord was preparing & getting me ready. Afterwards I could see that the Lord actually used the Convent partly just to keep me "in cold storage", uncommitted to the System until He could get you & the Family rolling! Ha! I think the Lord also used my years in the Convent as a kind of prototype or preview of & preparation for my life in the Family, because in many ways they're similar—the basics of dedicating your life to serving Jesus, forsaking all, even the concept of being married to Jesus which in the Convent was called being a "Bride of Christ".

**I WAS BORN IN 1941 IN OKLAHOMA, U.S.A.** & grew up there happily. My father was a very devout Catholic & we grew



Lydia today at 40 years old! After 9 years in the Family of God's Love, a liberated Nun of Love! TYJ! Photo by Peter Atlanta.

up in a very Catholic atmosphere & went to a Catholic school. I can't remember a time when Jesus wasn't a big part of my life or when I didn't love Him. Of course, I had no concept of "being saved", as it was all in Catholic terms & doctrine, but nevertheless the same Jesus. My Father was a great influence on me. He gave me so much that I am thankful for, especially for bringing me up in the fear & admonition of the Lord & for teaching me to love Jesus. And

I love him dearly for it. **I REMEMBER WHEN I TOLD MY FATHER I HAD DECIDED TO JOIN THE CONVENT** he was so touched & so happy. He told me that many years before when we were still small he had prayed & asked the Lord that at least one of his children would dedicate his or her life to the Lord, & of course to him my entering the Convent was definitely the answer to his prayer. Since joining the Family I have tried to show him that his prayer has

been fulfilled even more fully now, but he just doesn't understand why I left the Catholic Church. But when my husband Peter & I visited home in 1978, Daddy took us both aside one evening & shared with us that altho' he didn't really understand why we couldn't work within the Church (poor Daddy!), he knew we were doing the Lord's Work & what we felt was right, & he gave us both his blessing, GBH. He's now over 70 years old & still working hard, but I know it probably won't be long before the Lord takes him to his reward, & he'll be so happy then & be able to understand everything, TYJ!

**ALTHO' MY CHILDHOOD WAS GENERALLY NORMAL & HAPPY**, I felt a certain "aloneness", like many of us, beginning when I was very young, like I was somehow "set apart" or different & somehow didn't fit in like the rest, which became more noticeable to me as I got older & into my teens.

**I GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1959** & a few months later entered a small local convent of Benedictine Sisters in Oklahoma, along with two of my school friends. I did it because I sincerely wanted to give my life to serve Jesus, & that was the only way I knew of, as a Catholic, & at that time.

**SISTERS IN THE CONVENT ARE JUST LIKE PEOPLE IN THE CHURCHES**—many of them don't even know Jesus & aren't really saved; but some of them are, I think, & do really love Jesus & are motivated by His Love, as many of you have probably found too. I wasn't but a few years in the Convent, tho', when I became very disillusioned by the discovery that all the sisters in our community, or Convent family, weren't motivated necessarily by the love of Jesus, & I was shocked to find jealousy, hate & divisive contention, & all kinds of things there

at a time when I was particularly young & idealistic & naive.

**I RECEIVED A MORE OR LESS FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION** during my first 5 years & graduated with a B.A. & qualifications for a teacher's certificate. I remember having to struggle thru' all those horrible afternoon philosophy, psychology & theology classes, which left me either confused, bored or even asleep! **DURING THOSE FIRST 5 YEARS I ALSO WENT THRU' "NOVICESHIP TRAINING"**, taking so-called temporary vows for 3 years, like a trial run, after which we could either leave or go on to make "final vows" which was to be considered permanent. I made the decision & took my so-called "final vows" of Poverty, Chastity & Obedience, as they were called. Poverty actually meant basically the same as our "forsaking all", & we were taught about "having all things common" & turned in money & also gifts if others needed them more than we. Obedience also was similar in some ways to what you have taught us, Dad.

**CHASTITY MEANT THAT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE A "BRIDE OF CHRIST"** & therefore not to marry & certainly not to make love or have any sex which of course is based on that perennial false doctrine of the Devil & the churches that sex is bad & sinful & certainly not to be tolerated in those who especially dedicate their lives to God! The Catholic Church has sure lost a lot of its best workers & leadership over this one, as literally hundreds of priests & nuns left their posts & the Church to marry, especially during the 60's & all the struggles of the Vatican Council era. Anyway, I used to get under condemnation quite a bit for masturbating, ha! The Lord has surely brought me a long way since then!—(PTL!)

**"FROM NUN OF NOTHIN'" TO "NUN OF LOVE!" PTL!** That was just a faint shadow sym-

bolic of the reality Jesus wanted me to fulfill later. So now, by God's grace, "I am a Nun of Love! I live in a swinging convent of Nuns of Love who are all permanently & forever married to Christ & can never marry another!...a liberated convent of liberated Nuns of Love...sharing God's Love with those in need...giving our lives & love to make others forever happy!" (No. 570:79-81) Needless to say, Jesus has worked many miracles in my life since then in the area of sex.

Thank God, & thank you Dad, for the liberating Law of Love! **WELL, IN 1965 AFTER FINAL VOWS I BEGAN MY TEACHING CAREER!** My very first class was a wild group of 11-year-old 6th-graders in our convent school. I could really understand how you felt sometimes in those years you taught those junior high kids, Dad! I really prayed & was determined not to let them get the best of me, & in the next 5 or 6 years of teaching this age group I had several classes whom I grew very close to & really loved, hopefully with Jesus' love thru me, as best as I knew how then. They knew I was a different kind of "sister" even then as I did a lot of things with them outside of school—taking them places in the convent car, riding bikes, flying kites, going to their dances, & sharing their problems etc.

**IT'S FUNNY TO THINK THAT I COULD HAVE BEEN TEACHING** my future mate in the Family, Peter, who is 10 years younger than me! Who but the Lord would have ever dreamed at that point of matching up 8 years later this little teenage future drug-taking hippie with a young, habit-clad school-teaching Catholic nun? It could only happen in this Don Quixote, crazy, happy, loving & totally miraculous Family! TYJ!

**BUT EVEN AFTER TAKING FINAL VOWS, INSIDE I FELT**



1961, 20 years old, "all wrapped up" in "I'll bringeth out those which were bound with chains" (DM 25/1)

**THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG**, & I began to feel more & more disillusioned, empty, without direction & mostly just lonely & looking for real love. Many of my friends whom I'd joined the Convent with began to leave & I felt more & more alone. Our little community was a microcosmic sample of what was happening in the worldwide Catholic Church at that time, brought on by the Vatican Council, a split & polarisation of liberal & conservative & thought & practice & the throes of change & upheaval.

**IN OUR COMMUNITY I WAS ALWAYS IN THE SMALL MINORITY LIBERAL CAMP**, condemned as rebels by the bigger main group. Finally by 1968 I was part of the small group of about 30 who split from the main group to be able to live & work more freely unburdened by so many of the outdated traditions of men of the past. I really hoped at the time that this would be the answer & make me happy, but things were basically the same. We simply took our habits off & looked a little more modern & tried to become-one more with the people.

**I THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT LEAVING**, too, during those



1981, 40 years old! "From nun of nuthin' to Nun of Love! Photo by Peter Atlanta.

years but kept hesitating as I didn't know what I'd do if I left, & it was also a bit scary to leave after all those years & face the world alone. I remember crying out to the Lord so many times to show me what to do.

**FINALLY IN THE FALL OF 1971 I MADE THE DECISION THAT I SIMPLY HAD TO LEAVE** in order to find out what the Lord had for me. I knew He had to have something more than this slow wasting-away, but I had no idea what, so it was a blind step of faith into the darkness. But am I ever glad I took it! TYJ! So I wrote to Rome for my dispensation, ha! And I moved out of the convent home into an apartment by myself & began to acquire all the "worldly" things I felt I'd been missing all that time—nice

clothes, a car of my own, stereo, TV & gradually some boyfriends.

**BUT AFTER 3 OR 4 MONTHS I REALISED I WAS LONELIER THAN EVER** & was still not really happy. I even tried to forsake the Lord & stop believing in Him at one point, as I felt I'd tried Him to the nth degree & failed. But I couldn't get rid of Him—He was always there waiting for me at the bottom of my heart when I reached bottom. I used to spend hours out walking in the evening trying to figure out what I could do with my life & asking the Lord to show me what to do. I couldn't see anything I wanted to do with all my heart, & I felt I was a real weirdo. At this time I also had brief experiences with Jesus People & a few Charismatic groups, but these left me even more confused, dis-

appointed & especially lonely, not having found the love & direction I was so desperate for.

**SO THE LORD BROUGHT ME THRU THESE EXPERIENCES**, carefully setting the stage of my heart, bringing me to the ultimate point of desperation until it was exactly the right time for me: March 1972, about 8 months after I'd left the Convent. About one month before this the first small pioneer team of Family members arrived in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**ON THAT LIFE-CHANGING SATURDAY IN MARCH I RODE MY BICYCLE TO THE PARK** & was relaxing under a tree watching the people when I noticed a tall young man with a guitar moving slowly among the small groups. He turned & saw me & to my surprise walked straight over to me & sat down in front of me & without saying a word began singing a song, looking intently into my eyes. The singer was Asher Thanksgiving & the song was "How Long You Been Waiting?" (GBY, dear Asher for being so faithful & loving & letting the Lord use you to reach out & find me that day! And for lovingly & wisely shepherding me into the Fold!)

**THE SONG & THE LOVE SO TOUCHED ME THAT TEARS CAME TO MY EYES** before he finished the song because I knew that something very heavy was happening—the words, the timing were all too perfect, & I sensed he was sent!—"How long you been waiting for somebody to love you? How long you been waiting for someone to show you the way...?" Needless to say, he knew he'd found a sheep! So he began witnessing to me & soon found out I'd been in a convent for the last 12 years! What a shocker! Ha! An ex-nun!

**I SOON FOUND MYSELF SURROUNDED BY ABOUT 5 MORE YOUNG MEN** all smiling down at me with the same radiant look of love shining on their

faces. I was so taken by the love & totally new spirit of these boys that when they invited me to come home & eat supper with them I readily agreed (altho' going home with 6 strange guys wasn't usually my habit, ha!) So they stuffed my bicycle into the trunk of their old jalopy & away we went!

**MY MAIN IMPRESSION OF THAT FIRST EVENING** I spent with the Family was simply the sincere love I felt, & the joy & happiness, & all this because of Jesus! Using my shyness, the Devil really tried to keep me from going to visit them a second time, but I mustered the courage, with the Lord's help I'm sure, & was so surprised that they were so glad to see me & even remembered my name! (Hallelujah!)

**FROM THAT TIME ON I WAS HOOKED & THE LORD** did all the miracles necessary to bring me into His boat, TYJ! I was almost immediately swept off "Cloud 9" to go thru the first hard trials & testings. It only took a few Bible classes & a week of fellowshiping to find out there were quite a few doctrinal differences, to say the least, that I had to deal with after being so steeped in Catholic theology all my life! Ha! The Devil tried to use these things to discourage me, but I knew these radical young kids loved the same Jesus I loved & that was the most important thing! So I finally just threw all these doctrinal trials into the Lord's hands & asked Him to work it all out for me, & He did, TYJ!—Mostly thru the Word, of course!

**ONE THING THAT IMPRESSED ME THE MOST** was their simple, child-like faith, taking the Bible literally for what it says & that each promise can be claimed & stood on, now, today! This was totally new to me. I began to read the Gospels & the rest of the New Testament once again, & it was as if I was reading it for the first time—new & ex-

citing again! One of the first Mo Letters I heard, read to all one of those first evenings, was "Did God Make a Mistake?" When I heard it I immediately believed it & knew it was true, as it had the same ring of authority & truth as the Bible. "My sheep hear my voice & I know them, & they follow me."

**BUT IT WAS ONLY ABOUT 4 MONTHS LATER, DAD**, that I came to really believe who you were. I was already in Australia & I remember the day you came into my heart, TYJ! In those days only the older brothers had a fair collection of Mo Letters, & one day Gibeah let me read for the first time the Letter "David" As I read that Letter, you, David came into my heart.—That's the only way I can describe what happened to me. Suddenly I realised & believed who you are! TYJ! "I didn't choose to be your learner: God chose me—I merely obeyed! I said, 'Lord, I'll follow show me the way!'—And He did, & it led straight into your hearts & you took me in! You opened your hearts & you took me in & received me as your Friend, & more, as your own beloved Father in the Lord, your Shepherd, whose voice you suddenly knew was yours, & followed, for it was the Lord's voice thru me!" (DM, May 11) TYJ! (Amen!)

**SO AFTER TWO MONTHS OF VISITING, AT THE END OF TEACHING THE SCHOOL TERM** in May, I pulled up what few stakes I'd had a chance to put down in the System, forsook all & moved in full-time. I was immediately transferred to the next closest colony in Wichita, Kansas, where I stayed for 1½ months & where I went thru some of my heaviest trials. With out the understanding & loving encouragement of Hazor & Lysra & all the other brothers & sisters in that colony I probably wouldn't have made it! GBY all!

**AT THIS POINT "THE GREAT ESCAPE" CAME OUT**

—FROM NUN OF NOTHIN' TO NUN OF LOVE—