



**Peggy Nijam**  
Diocese of Ballarat

Peggy Nijam was born Peggy O'Neill, in the North of England, the oldest of five children, and attended Loreto College, Manchester during the war years of 1939-45. In 1948 her fiancé Ray Nijam migrated to Australia, joining the Victorian Police Force. She followed a year later and they married in Melbourne. They raised a family of nine children, a tenth child dying in infancy. The family lived in a number of places before settling at Magpie, a suburb of Ballarat. They were very happy as migrants, but acute stresses of police work took heavy toll on the marriage and they separated in 1982. Ray died ten years later.

Peggy worked in the Diocesan Finance Office from 1979-1989, then as a pastoral Associate in the Sebastopol Parish for the next four years. She also studied part-time for a Bachelor of Theology and Pastoral Studies and graduated in 1994. This was followed by a qualification in couple therapy with Relationships Australia. In 1994 she completed a course in Apostolic Spirituality at St Bueno's Jesuit Spirituality Centre in North Wales and on returning to Australia began to work annually as a Spiritual Director with Jesuit Tertiaries and also giving Retreats in Daily Life in a number of parishes. From 1994-1999 she was diocesan coordinator of Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

At the Diocesan Assembly of 2004, Peggy became the Convener of a Diocesan Reference Group for Faith Formation and Spirituality. This group has done ongoing research and promotion of Parish Adult Formation Initiatives throughout the Ballarat Diocese. She has also been a committed member of St James Parish, Sebastopol since its inception and was a member of the Pastoral Team until 2007.

Peggy gives spiritual direction and has given the full Spiritual Exercise of St Ignatius to seven people. She mainly uses Ignatian and Benedictine Prayer forms in her ministry. For the last five years she has also been a member of a CLC (Christian Life Community) prayer group.

Peggy has twenty-five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She travels to Queensland and other places annually to visit her far-flung family, and occasionally even including one daughter in Fiji. She is a member of Probus, Buninyong (a special group for retired people) where she organizes group film outings and also enjoys a philosophy group at U3A (University of the 3rd Age.) Other interests include a great canasta group, dining out with friends, showcase films and Sudoku puzzles. She is 81 years old.