

The Girl Who Loved Life



by Verna Kelley, PBVM



Sisters of the Presentation
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

In Joyful Service

To Presentation Sisters the world over who walk in
the footsteps of Nano Nagle.

- Sister Verna

The Girl Who Loved Life

by Verna Kelley, PBVM
illustrated by Marie Thielen



Hi! Remember me! I'm Mary Lou Johnson.
Maybe you read my first book about
vocations. I bet you thought you would never
hear from me again. Surprise! Here I am!

We got the neatest project to do at school. I'm in third grade this year. We get to use computers. I am so excited, but back to the project. We have to use reference books and Internet and get information about a Saint or Hero or Holy Person or Important Person.

Remember I told you that story about Nano Nagle in my book on vocations and the poor people and the dancing. I've been thinking a lot about Nano Nagle. I am going to do my paper on Nano Nagle.





Nano was born in 1718 at Ballygriffin, County Cork, Ireland. I had no idea where Ireland was, so I found a map and looked it up. It's not very big!

I know some people who are Irish. Sounds like it's pretty cool to be Irish. They get all dressed up in green on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, and have big parades and eat something called "corned beef." Sounds strange to me!

Nano's mom and dad were pretty rich, richer than most Catholics at that time. A book I found about Nano said that Nano was a wild girl. She loved to jump, run, and climb. I can just see her running through the green meadow by her house.

There was a big tree, a barn and a river. Some kids dared Nano to jump from the tree to the roof of the barn.

"Jump, Nano." "I dare you to jump."



Nano saw the big barrel of water by the roof. Being a daring girl, she just had to jump.

"I'm really afraid," said Nano to herself.

All the children were waiting. All together they shouted. "One, two, three, jump!" Nano jumped.

She didn't reach the roof but instead, PLOP! SPLASH! She landed in the barrel of water. She was wringing wet and had chipped her tooth. Her sister Ann and brother Joseph ran to get their mom. Nano was in trouble! Whenever Nano got in trouble, her mother would say, "You just wait until your father gets home!"

My mom does that too. It must be something parents or moms do to scare their little kids into behaving.



It was not good to be a Catholic in Ireland at this time in history. When Nano was small there were no schools in Ireland for Catholic children.

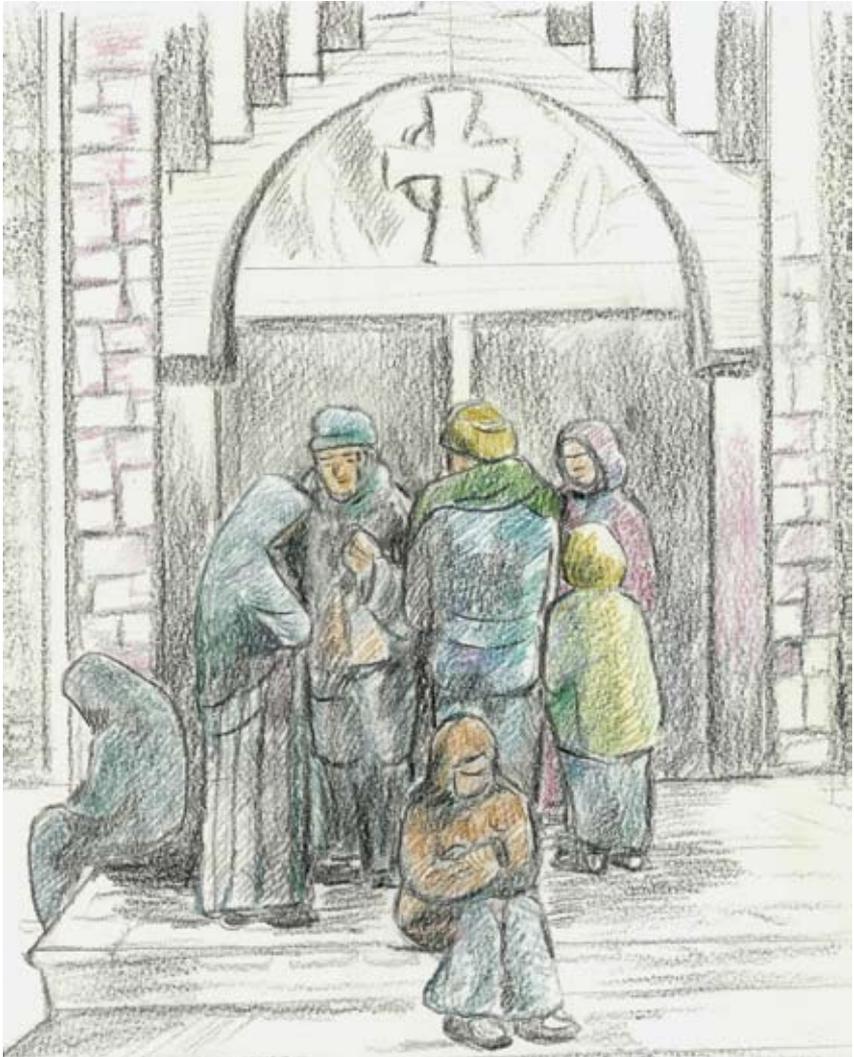
Some brave teachers went about looking like beggars and were called, "Hedge School Masters." One of the pupils stood guard and if the soldiers came the child would run and yell, "The soldiers are coming!"

The children hid the religion papers and everybody got their math papers out! Hedge School Masters got their name because they taught their classes beside country hedges or in old buildings.

Nano loved to play sometimes rather than do her studies. When Nano was 13 years old, her parents sent her to France to be educated by sisters. Nano did not like school but she loved the dances and parties. She loved dressing up in fancy clothes.



Remember I told you the story of Nano coming home at five o'clock in the morning from dancing all night. She saw many poor people standing at the church. They were huddled together in the bitter cold waiting for Mass and the church doors to open.



Nano thought of this scene many times. She thought, "What am I doing with my life?"

But Nano still loved parties. She bought some beautiful silk material to make a new dress for a dance. She yelled, "Ann, have you seen my silk material I bought to make a new dress?" Ann said, "Oh, I'm sorry Nano. I sold the material and got money for a poor family."

Nano couldn't be angry with Ann. She loved the poor and helped them a lot. Nano often thought of the little Irish children with no one to teach them.

Nano's father died and she and Ann went back to Ireland to be with their mother. Then Ann died at the age of 23.

Nano really missed her sister Ann. Nano had helped Ann with the poor. She kept thinking of the children. How could she help them? She decided she would be a sister and pray for the children. She went to France again, this time to be a Sister.

Nano was worried about the children. She was not happy in France being a sister. The priest told her to go back to Ireland and work for the children of Ireland.

Jesus was calling her! I wonder if I'll get a call from Jesus to be a sister.

Nano found an old building and started a school. She lived with her brother Joseph and, in 1754, Nano found her first school in Cork City, Ireland.

Two years later Nano had seven schools in Cork City. Some other women worked with Nano and helped her teach in the schools. Nano loved teaching in her schools. She always taught the children their religion. She loved to tell stories about Jesus. Nano loved Jesus and spent many hours in prayer. The other teachers taught the math, reading, and spelling. They also taught the girls how to sew and help their mothers.

Nano taught school all day and at night she took a lantern and walked the streets of Cork City looking for the poor and the sick. She was called "The Lady of the Lantern."



Nano was getting old and sick. She could no longer walk to her seven girls' schools and two boys' schools. Nano worried about her schools. Who would teach the children? Soon three young ladies joined Nano on Christmas Eve 1775. These four women dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and became a religious order. Nano was often heard saying, "If I could be of service in saving souls in any part of the world I would gladly do all in my power."

Later the name of this group of women was changed to "Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Today there are many Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They work to bring Christ's love to children everywhere. They work with the poor, the sick, those unfairly treated by the world, and youth of all ages.

Nano died April 26, 1784. As she lay dying she said to her sisters, "Love one another and spend yourself for the poor."

Nano was a hard worker. She loved the children. She loved the poor.

I hope I am like her and help others when I grow up.

My teacher, Sister Mary Jane is a Presentation Sister. I love her.

The End



I wonder what the teacher will give me on my paper? I hope she likes it.

I just reread it and I think it is pretty good. It's my best work!



Join Mary Lou Johnson as she experiences life as an elementary student. In this book Mary Lou undertakes a third grade project about an important person. Mary Lou was intrigued by the story of Nano Nagle, who she learned about from her teacher. Here Mary Lou explores the life of Nano, foundress of the Presentation Sisters. Nano's life provides the backdrop as Mary Lou learns more about not only this important person, but also the Presentation Sisters.



Sister Verna Kelley is a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM) from Aberdeen, South Dakota. She grew up in Aberdeen and entered Presentation Convent in 1946. For over 50 years Sister served as an educator at schools across the region. She is now retired, but continues to be active in prayer ministry and in the foster grandparent program, where she uses her background as an educator to reach out to children in the Aberdeen area.



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