



## **My Christian calling to protect the vulnerable** **By Melissa Glavin**

Every baptised Christian is uniquely called by God, to holiness of life and to mission in the Church for the sake of God's Kingdom in the world. In this sense, every Christian has a vocation.

When I started working in child protection and out of home care almost two decades ago, I realised from the beginning that my heart was captured by the opportunities in front of me. I began to see the ways in which God could use His Church to redeem brokenness and restore families in incredibly beautiful ways. I knew there was no turning back and that working with vulnerable children and families was my vocation. I knew that I was called by God to do this work.

I currently have the privilege of working for CatholicCare, Diocese of Broken Bay as the Principal Foster Care Support, Recruitment and Assessment Officer. I work alongside and support Foster Carers who care for children and young people that had to be moved out of their homes through no fault of their own in order to provide safety and stability. A Foster Carer's role is to provide a nurturing, safe environment for children and young people in families in need of help, until the children can be reunited with their families. Some children and young people unfortunately cannot return home, which means some Foster Carers make a long-term commitment to a child or young person in their care.

Should other Christians consider working in Foster Care? Yes, most certainly. Christians should prayerfully consider Foster Care. Not that everyone will want to work as a front-line worker, such as myself. Others may be able to become Foster Carers themselves, if it is God's will. Christians should at least be open to these possibilities and pray for discernment for their own vocation.

Christians should consider Foster Care because we are called to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13–14). Foster parents are difference-makers. Taking in a foster child may not change the world, but it will change the world for that child.

Being a Foster Carer is a wonderful way to demonstrate their love of Christ. Jesus Christ had compassion on the "harassed and helpless" multitudes (Matthew 9:36); He received children to bless them (Mark 10:16); He taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

Christians should consider Foster Care because of God's commands to care for the vulnerable and most in need. "Defend the weak and the fatherless" (Psalm 82:3; cf. Isaiah 1:17). Protecting vulnerable children shows the heart of God.

James tells us that “Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27). I have held this verse close to my heart, during my Foster Care journey.

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