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## **An Aussie family Christmas with an American flavor**

Piaf Kroeger is a Cooperator of Opus Dei from Sydney Australia. Mother and part-time teacher, she is married to Kevin and they have 4 children. Kevin hails from Hannibal, Missouri, USA.

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*How has being a co-operator helped you?* I became a cooperator when I was at university. During this time

many of my friends were searching for answers to life's big questions. I found the faith formation I was receiving helped answer many of these questions and my faith became more real and personal. During this time I gained a deeper understanding of the Church's teachings and more importantly I felt supported and encouraged to live my faith in all areas of my life. This has continued to this day. The formation I receive as a cooperator helps me live my faith in a united way whether I am at home, at work or with friends. It helps me try to be a good wife, mother, friend and teacher.

*How did you meet Kevin?*

Kevin and I met in early 2000. It was my brother Paul's birthday and he was given two tickets to the Harbour Bridge Climb but the friend that was meant to be joining him had pulled

out at the last minute. I was the replacement! Kevin was back-packing around Australia and it just so happened that he was climbing the bridge that day as well. We struck up a friendship and from there stayed in contact via email.

Over the next several months Kevin and I wrote to each other regularly and bonded over our similar hobbies as well as a common Catholic faith. Kevin was very involved in the Catholic LifeTeen movement in the US while I was attending formation activities at a centre of Opus Dei in Sydney. Although Kevin knew little about the Work he was very impressed with the depth of my faith and found *The Way* very helpful in his own prayer life.

Over the next two years we wrote emails, made many very long phone calls and took turns travelling back and forth between the two countries.

I travelled to the US and did a study-exchange at the University of California for 6 months. Although Kevin was living in Silicon Valley during this time (a 2 hour drive from the university), it was closer than Australia!. After this trip we were engaged and we married in February 2004. We now have four children and live in a rural suburb of Sydney. I work as a part-time art teacher and juggle four young children. Kevin works as a financial adviser.

*Christmas Traditions* Each year we have a few traditions leading up to Christmas. We follow a Nativity/Advent Calendar and count down the days till Jesus is born. The children help make a gingerbread house which is eaten on Christmas day. We also make cinnamon rolls and hand them out to family and friends. And finally we do a big family puzzle over the Christmas period; we don't always finish as there are hundreds

of tiny pieces but it is a fun activity nonetheless that everyone can be involved in.

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