

In *Tracing my Journey* Margaret Ahern Noonan charts her life from her earliest years growing up outside Athea in County Limerick in the late 1940s and early 1950s, through almost three decades as a Presentation Sister, entering the novitiate in Castleconnell, County Limerick, at the age of fifteen, moving to England, and finally travelling to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the months before her 21st birthday in 1955. At first Margaret worked in schools for the children of wealthy white people before completing her training as a nurse and working with the poor in various mission stations, including Avila Mission, St Therese's Mission and her beloved Mount Melleray Mission.

Margaret's dedication to her work in the mission stations shines through as she describes a people and land that she came to love dearly in spite of the daily challenges she encountered. Growing unrest and indiscriminate killings throughout the late 70s resulted in the closure of many stations run by European religious orders. Margaret was the last Irish Sister left in her mission station but, finally, in 1981, after a number of threats, she reluctantly left Zimbabwe.

On her return to Ireland, Margaret found a much-changed landscape for religious Sisters. She writes about the difficulties she experienced in trying to find a role for herself in Ireland. Following a number of years working with those suffering from addictions, Margaret made the decision to leave religious life. She writes about her new life as a private nurse to Judy Graves who became a firm friend, and her discovery of the world for the first time as an independent adult. When Bill Noonan enters her life, Margaret falls in love and embraces a new chapter in her journey which takes her back to the area where she grew up, to married life with Bill and, eventually, 18 years after she had to leave, to an emotional return to Zimbabwe.

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*The Flame Lily, as pictured on the front cover, is the national flower of Zimbabwe.*

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