

# Mary Notes



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Sisters of Mary of the Presentation  
Maryvale Convent, Valley City, ND

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## **Happy New Year — 2011**

By Sister Carol Jean Kuntz, SMP Provincial

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ fill our lives. As the New Year begins, I pause to reflect on what can I do to make this year different from last year. Each year we are given the opportunity and are blessed to review our priorities, to look at what guides our thoughts and decisions and to reflect on the kind of people each of us are and who we want to become, I came across the following that I thought was rather interesting:

### **A Recipe for a New Year**

~ Anonymous ~

***Take twelve fine, full-grown months; see that these are thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, rancor and hate, cleanse them completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness and littleness; in short, see that these months are freed from all the past- have them fresh and clean as when they first came from the great storehouse of Time. Cut these months into thirty or thirty-one equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many persons spoil the entire lot this way) but prepare one day at a time.***

***Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, courage, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest), hope fidelity, liberality, kindness, rest (leaving this out is like leaving the oil out of the salad dressing – don't do it), prayer, meditation, and one well-selected resolution. Put in about one teaspoonful of good spirits, a dash of fun, a pinch of folly, a sprinkling of play, and a heaping cupful of good humor.***

As 2010 comes to a close and we begin 2011, may the light of Christ shine brightly through you, by a smile generously given, a listening ear and a compassionate heart. My prayer for you is in the words of the inspired author of the Book of Numbers: "The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace."

## Who Will You Play For?

The Fargo Diocese Senior Youth Celebration this year was hosted by St. Cecilia's Parish, Harvey, and held on November 21, 2010 in the High School building, except for Mass which was in the parish church. The theme for this celebration was based on the scripture of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 9:14 "Do You not know that...all run in the race, but only one wins prize? Run so as to win."

The keynote speaker for this event was Justin Fatica from Erie, PA. In 1997 as a young man sitting in St. Paul's Cathedral in Erie, Justin had an experience with God that so touched his heart that he was encouraged to make Christ known. He believed that God had something really big planned so that he could bring praise and honor to the love of his life, Jesus Christ. At the age of seventeen Justin promised God that he would dedicate his life to spreading the name of his personal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so he continues to do this through both his "in the face" style and his gentle tender hearted approach. Justin was able to move the hearts of many of the youth and helped healing to come to them through his words, prayer and the involvement of other youth in the audience.

Many workshops were offered which were led by either Justin, other lay people or priests. The workshops were addressed to adults/youth, adults only, or youth only.

After Mass and supper a dance led by DJ Bill Lage concluded the event.

Sr. Marlyss and Sr. Dorothy Bunce were present for this youth celebration and set up the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation Vocation booth. Due to predictions of stormy weather, however, they needed to leave earlier than expected as the wind and snow rapidly picked up velocity.

Sister Dorothy Bunce

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## Reflection

Sister Dorothy Bunce

As I have reflected upon the Council of Congregation message 2010, I have come to realize how the ministries I am involved in dovetail and become one, as well as, resemble the direction given by this orientation. Sitting with persons in retreat and spiritual direction sessions and sitting at the bedside of patients moves me to witness to the love of Christ and respect the dignity of each person. This in turn helps me to listen and speak in a way that I might move persons to connect with their inner need for God and relationship with others. At the same time I listen for the inner loneliness a person often experiences when ill and disconnected with the spiritual. At other times I am amazed and blessed by the deep faith of each person who come from a variety of faith traditions.

These experiences of ministry help me to become aware of my own inner need as I search for meaning in the recent death of my only sister, my failed attempts to be Christ for others and the tug of God to inner conversion.

The Council of Congregation message gives me hope as it proclaims God's words to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient to you, for my power is revealed in your weaknesses." (2 Cor. 12:9)

Patient,  
Elderly, Sick,  
Young, Baby, Teenager  
Pneumonia, Heart, Appendectomy  
Loved, Alone, Estranged, Respected  
Pilgrim, Traveler, Transient, Disabled, Saint  
Searching, Needing, Weeping, Praising  
Praying, Speaking, Listening  
Finding, Holding  
Christ



## 9/11 Memorial Service

Ave Maria Village hosted a memorial service in honor of those who died in the 9/11 tragedy and to thank the protective agencies that keep our country free and safe.

The program was held on Saturday, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> in the Barthel Room at the Village. Several Sisters of Mary of the Presentation attended as well as about 100 people, mostly American Veterans and family members.

The protection agencies represented were: 6 National Guard members; 1 from the Fire Department; 2 from the Police Department, (although 1 had to leave on an emergency); 2 from the Ambulance crew and 1 from Medical Services.

A special flag was created by residents and staff placing hand prints on a very large piece of canvas. It is estimated that the flag contains approximately 3,000 finger tips, which is very close to the number of people who died in the tragedy.

Dr. Steven Reed, Philosophy and Religion Professor from Jamestown College was the guest speaker.



Deacon Tom Geffre

## Casting the Net: Vocation Ministry in a Global Church and World

It was the weekend of November 4-8 that Sr. Dorothy Bunce and Sr. Anne Germaine attended the National Religious Vocation Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. It was a cold bitter weekend that was filled with Hope, Peace and Faith as 375 attendees from the U.S. Canada, England, and Australia attended the conference. NRVC is a professional organization that provides resources and support for those in vocation ministry as well as a biennial convocation. We had some excellent speakers, liturgies, prayer together throughout these days. Br. Paul Bednarczyk, CSC, executive director of the NRVC conference, said, "Based on the NRVC's study on Recent Vocations, we know that globalization, the convocation's theme, is the hope and challenge of religious life today. We must cast the net wide but make sure we offer depth, strength, and wholeness to those considering a religious vocation."

Other keynote speakers included Br. David Andrew's SCC, who voiced the need for a spirituality of globalization. Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, who spoke on new techniques and the digital culture they created, which she

describes as mission territory for the Church, and Fr. Bryan Massingale, STD, explored the theology of globalization. These were heavy topics for consideration, ponder and action in order that the invitation of the Lord be extended through our Vocation efforts as we Cast the net into the deep in faith and trust that men and women will hear the voice of God's call of Consecrated life and mission.

Other hi-lights of the convocation were that Archbishop Gregory Raymond of New Orleans, presided at the Friday evening liturgy and gave his support to the Vocation Directors. Awards were also given to Fr. Kevin Nadolski OSF and Sr. Magdala Marie Gilbert OSB for their contributions to vocation ministry and to Fr. Robin Ryan, CP and Catholics on Call, a ministry dedicated to helping young adult Catholics discern their role in the church and the world received the "Harvest Award."

Horizon, the quarterly journal of the NRVC will publish the addresses in the Winter 2011 issue which will come out in February if anyone is interested in reading these presentations. We will be happy to share them with you.

Sister Anne Germaine Picard SMP

# Angel of the Month

## Sr. Mary Agnes Huber



Each month the staff at St. Aloisius Medical Center can nominate any fellow staff person they see, that is doing something over and above their job in the hospital and nursing home. Only the committee knows who the angel of the month is, until they announce it over the loud speaker, or they come to find that person, and walk them to the front lobby. At the front lobby of the hospital, the committee sets up a table of goodies for the staff

to enjoy lunch free of charge. The committee furnishes the lunch, and if you are chosen as angel of the month, then next month you will be asked to bring something for the lunch table. I was waiting around that afternoon, to see who the angel of the month was going to be, so I could congratulate that person. My beeper went off and I was asked to come to the front desk area, and to my surprise, I discovered that I was the Angel of the Month. After the committee reads what the person wrote about you over the loud speaker, you have lunch and they come with an envelope that has a meal ticket, free movie pass, and a coupon for a hair product at one of the beauty shops in town, plus a coupon for a cup of cappuccino coffee from Woody's (car service) and a special place to park your car for the whole month.

Attached is what the person (Donna Corneliusen) said about me: *On a very busy day, as I was making time to prepare for the Relay of Life Pie Social, Sr. Mary Agnes just quietly showed up and asked how she could help and pitched in to get everything ready on time. Then, since one of our volunteers was running late, she offered to stay and help serve pies and collect donations, freeing me to get back to work.*

*Sr. Mary Agnes is watchful for places where a hand is needed and then lends hers. She certainly made a positive difference in my day.*

I do have to admit that was the first time I had a cup of cappuccino coffee. This day was very special to me, as I am sure there are other people here at St. Aloisius Medical Center that could have been angels of the month of August. Thanks for the special recognition that was given to me that day. Oh! I forgot to mention that one has their picture taken and it is posted on the bulletin board by the switchboard. May God Bless each and every one of you, who work in carrying on the mission of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation.

Sr. Mary Agnes Huber



## As We Encounter Jesus...

Christ is present to all of us, and in a special way to those who count on us. A few years ago, I learned of the "Prayer Shawl." I make it with yarn, good will and prayer. It is twenty-four inches by fifty inches. I began this ministry by using bits of yarn I found in our store room and I discovered that I could make a beautiful "Prayer Shawl" by mixing and matching a variety of colors of yarn. I make about two of them a month.

I make them for our Long Term Care Homes for the elderly people. A note came from one of the CEO's saying how grateful they were to have a "Prayer Shawl" to give to the family. There was a woman who died in one of our Long Term Care Homes, and her children were very sad. After awhile one of the daughters came out of the room with the prayer shawl wrapped around her shoulder, holding it tightly. She was still tearful and was obviously in mourning but the prayer shawl seemed to visibly comfort her. Yes, they are a true gift of comfort and blessing. I have received many thank you letters from the spiritual care givers of our Long Term Care Homes. God has given me this gift and I pray that I may use it as long as I can.

Sister Eloise Marie Pulskamp

# Mongolia, Empire of the Eternal Blue Sky

By Doug Whitman, Associate

It's a rainy Thursday morning in New York city at 5 am. Under normal circumstances I am not awake at this hour, but it's the jet lag. Ironic, I think, that it's pouring rain here from the effects of some tropical storm, when I just returned from 2 ½ weeks in the "Empire of the Eternal Blue Sky," Mongolia.

This was my second trip to Mongolia with an organization called United Cerebral Palsy Wheels for Humanity (UCP-WFH). This non-profit NGO (non-governmental organization) collects donated medical equipment, mostly in the form of wheelchairs, in the United States and ships giant containers to locations all over the world. A team of volunteers follows the shipping container and distributes the wheelchairs in cooperation with a local organization, in this case the Mongolian based Organization for Wheelchair Assistance in the Mongolian Capital, Ulaan Baatar.

Our team this year consisted of Holly and David, our two team leaders from WFH, Melissa, an Occupational Therapist from Toronto, Amy a physical therapist from Australia, and myself. Our Mongolian partners this year were Zol, a film maker and our translator, Vaanchiq, a physician and mountain climber, and Bataar, our fearless driver and mechanic. In total, the team had a frightening number of combined years of experience (we three therapists alone with nearly 50 years!) in evaluation and fitting complicated custom wheelchairs to disabled individuals in our respective countries.

All the members of our team had been on WFH distribution trips to other nations. Melissa had not only traveled to Mongolia before (this was her fourth trip), but also participated in distributions to Mexico and Costa Rica. Amy had assisted with a distribution in Vietnam, and I began my WFH involvement with a trip to Zimbabwe several years ago. Mongolia is a very unique nation and vastly different than any of the distribution trips that any of us had participated before.

Mongolia is a vast country, roughly twice the size of Texas or three times the size of France, sandwiched between China and Russia. It consists mostly of high steppe plateaus, mountains, and desert landscapes. Some parts remind me of



Nevada, other areas Colorado. It is very, very dry and usually rains only in the late summer. The rest of the year it bears the ancient title of Empire of the Eternal Blue Sky. With a population of just over 2.5 million in the entire country, and 1.2 million of these living in the capital of Ulaan Bataar (or simply "UB" as its often called), it's sparsely populated in most of the countryside. Additionally,

it should be noted that Mongolia is a nation that has traditionally been made of up a nomadic herding culture. In 1990 when the USSR began to crumble and Mongolia's renaissance began, the country had few cars. Most people, even in the capital city, still rode horses and drove carts pulled by oxen or camels around the dirt roads of UB. Today there are a lot of cars and many people have satellite dishes or cell phones (Lonely Planet reports that as many as 800,000 Mongolians have cell phones!), but the infrastructure is very under-developed and the roads remain very poor. This makes travel extremely difficult outside UB. Travel is even more difficult for those with disabilities. At about 7:30 pm on one of our distribution days we were just closing up our work area, putting things away, and getting ready to go have a relaxing dinner, when two families arrived, each with a little boy needing a customized wheelchair. They had been traveling all day from 90 kilometers (approximately 55 miles) away, and their vehicle broke down in a river (no bridge).

In the past few years, many roads have been built but most are in and around UB. Travel in the countryside remains extremely difficult. This is one of the reasons that the Mongolian Organization for Wheelchair Assistance organizes the WFH equipment distributions in the countryside rather than in the capital. On distribution trips to other nations, the disabled individuals often come (or are transported) to a central location in a major city. The team is stationed at one place, as in my trip to Zimbabwe, at a hospital. Using this model, the wheelchairs are shipped to one place and many wheelchairs can be distributed in a shorter amount of time. The lack of roads, long distances between

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towns, and the level of difficulty of travel in Mongolia make this model of distribution impractical and nearly impossible. Therefore the local Mongolian team arranges for wheelchairs to be trucked out to the countryside where the disabled individuals need them, and the team travels to locations around the country to assist with the distribution. The model of a centralized wheelchair distribution in Mongolia just doesn't work.

With contacts through other NGO's or the government social services agencies, the Mongolian team finds the individuals who need wheelchairs in the provinces to be visited by the WFH team. Some basic information is gathered about the individuals and an assortment of wheelchairs, crutches, canes and other miscellaneous medical equipment is taken by truck or van to the provinces to be visited. This year the Mongolian team arranged for us to visit the provinces (or 'aimaga') of Zavkhan and Arkhangai in the central western region of the country. Three members of the Mongolian team drove two very long hard days to bring wheelchairs out to the west. Some were sent ahead on hired trucks. The WFH team flew out two days later to begin to assist with the set-up and distribution of the equipment.

Another problem with reaching disabled individuals in the remote countryside is the cost of travel and transport. In past years the Mongolian government has assisted our organizations with some of the transportation costs to truck the equipment out to remote provinces. Over the past few years, that funding has dried up. The Mongolian team often has to pay from their own pockets to try to fund this operation, with the WFH assisting where it can.

Our first distribution was in the Zavkhad Aimag capital of Uliastai, a rugged and picturesque town of about 2000 people in a valley west of the Hangai mountain range. We set up shop in the backyard of a small rehabilitation clinic in the town. Working outside in bright sun, we set up all the wheelchairs that had been delivered and soon people of all ages and disabilities started arriving. Many were elderly with conditions such as severe arthritis or had suffered strokes that limited their mobility. Some had spinal cord injuries from motor vehicle accidents or farming accidents like being thrown from a horse. One individual I worked with had no

feet and only one hand after multiple amputations due to sever frostbite from the previous winter. We saw children as well, many with cerebral palsy or spinal bifida, and other developmental disabilities. Often it was difficult to communicate and information is lost in translation. It is difficult to obtain medical history as many times people don't really know what is wrong with them or their children. We ask questions through interpreters and try to piece together the stories, then select the equipment that is most appropriate from what we have to offer. We adjust the wheelchairs as closely as we can to the needs of the individual, and then provide instruction for the safe use of the wheelchair with the environment. Sometimes we offer advice for therapeutic exercise, simple home programs that families can use to enhance development or rehabilitation of the disabled individual, or advice on skin protection and prevention of pressure sores caused by prolonged sitting.

After the wheelchair distribution was finished in the town, we went on "home visits" to see those who cannot travel outside of their homes to the town center. Many people in Mongolia still live in traditional homes called 'gers' especially in the countryside. A 'ger' (sometimes called a 'yurt') is a tent made of felt with wooden greener pastures. The traditional culture of Mongolia is nomadic, and these heavy felt gers are transportable, but also protect the herders and their families from the brutal winters on the steppe. The ger creates some unusual environmental obstacles for wheelchair users. There is always a high threshold to enter and a very short doorway. The ger is usually small and the floor is often uneven, sometimes dirt or

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Doug Whitman with a family from Mongolia. Doug fitted their child for a wheelchair.

covered by a piece of linoleum or a rug. Western toilets are absolutely unheard of in the countryside and an outhouse or “squat” toilet is the only option.

After a few days in and around Uliastai, we began our journey east, stopping at ‘sums’ or small towns and villages along the way. In each sum where we stopped, there was a handful of people with various mobility impairments, usually too severe to enable them to travel the rough roads and distance into the provincial capital. Sometimes we would see people in their gers, or even in a dusty parking lot. We tried to assess the individuals through an interpreter and address their seating and mobility needs as best we could with the equipment we had to provide.

After a couple of days of bouncy travel in our Russian mini van, we arrived in Tsetserleg, provincial capital of Arkhangai. We were accommodated in a ger behind a restaurant and the next day set-up shop in the lot behind our ger. Again, many individuals arrived with various disabilities and many wheelchairs were provided. The next couple of days consisted of home visits and trips to other sums on our way east toward UB.

All in all the trip to the countryside was a little over a week in length and about 70 – 80 wheelchairs total were provided to individuals in remote towns and villages of western and Central Mongolia. Because of the poor roads and difficult travel conditions, a typical wheelchair distribution

in a large urban center is not practical for the most needy disabled individuals in the remote locations around this vast, sparsely populated country. The trip was successful, not because of the number of wheelchairs we provided, but because we were able to travel to the remote areas to see the individuals who could not travel to UB and provided them with the equipment and services they would not have any other way to access. Mongolia is unique in this way.

The most vivid memory I take away from the trips to Mongolia is the amazing people we meet. The warmth and hospitality of the Mongolian people in a harsh and unforgiving landscape makes this country like no other.



Doug looking out a traditional Mongolian tent/house called a ‘ger’.

## Memorial Gazebo Houses Sacred Heart Statue



We have received many memorials, including when our Sisters died, and we wanted to do something special in their memory. The idea of a gazebo came to us. A kit was ordered and we watched with much interest as Tom Musgrave, Dallas Griebela, Scott Preston, and Patrick Schlenvogt put together the gazebo and made the boardwalk. We also wanted a place to put a Sacred Heart Statue and the gazebo became its home. The Sacred Heart Statue comes from Spring Valley, IL and is close to 100 years old.

## CEO Retreat at Maryvale

On October 4-6, 2010, the CEO's of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation Health System converged upon Maryvale to begin their annual retreat. Among the participants were Aaron Alton and his wife Jan, Jodi Atkinson, Craig Christianson, Lisa Schnedler, Jack Kennelly, Rocky Zastoupil, Bruce Davidson, Tim Burchill, Nancy Farnham, Mike Pfeifer, Terry Welle, Terry Judd, Tim Muntz, Sister Carol Jean Kuntz, Sister Suzanne Stahl, Sister Rose Therese Sevigny, and Sister Margaret Rose Pfeifer.

Our presenter was Monsignor Robert Laliberte who condensed Philosophy 101, 102, 103, into 3 short sessions under the topics:

- a) An historical perspective of philosophies that have shaped our cultures
- b) Identification of the current philosophical influences in our culture that contribute to the separation of the contemporary culture from Catholic teaching and thought
- c) Secularization of Catholic health care in the United States: forces that shape Catholic health care into a non-Catholic image

The information given was "deep", challenging, and plentiful "meat" to chew! Monsignor traced the evolution of objective virtue/good to the present pragmatism that says "if it works its good". My will, my want, decides all things. A point he mentioned that truly spoke to me was the idea of the "sad story." The media uses this tactic a great deal. Whenever they wish to promote a value-person-idea,

they will use a story in relation to it and we, being charitable people, are often influenced by it. Sometimes we forget the power of the word. We need to use it to spread our beliefs, our ways of living, our convictions, for in freedom from illness, freedom from sin, we obtain conversion. And isn't that our desire, God's desire? Conversion for self, then to others we serve which merits our goal-God.

On the second day a panel of three CEO's namely, Tim Burchill, Bruce Davidson, and Jodi Atkinson gave a presentation on the topic: How do we demonstrate to our employees and communities our personal commitment to our mission and ministry identity? Discussion was held and others responded with stories of their own. REMEMBER: A story goes a long way to promote a feeling, an emotion, a belief, a way of life.

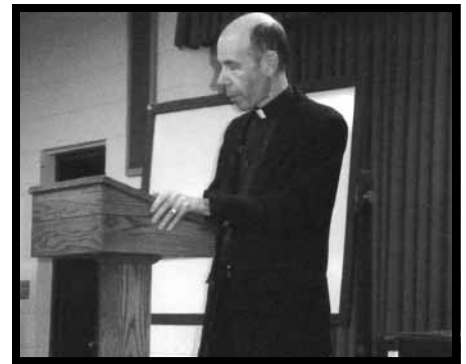
We also had an opportunity for friendship and fun. The evenings were spent in games enjoyed by most of us. We even learned a few new ones.

We concluded the days by the Liturgy of the Mass. Our celebrant was Monsignor Dennis Skonseng from St. Catherine's Parish in Valley City. At the end of the Mass, Sister Carol Jean Kuntz, Provincial, blessed and commissioned each of the attendees. Then a thank you was given to the planner of the retreat, Jack Kennelly, our new Mission Leader. We also thanked SMPHS for providing this great time of spiritual and social growth for each one of us.

Sister Rose Therese



**Front:** Sr. Suzanne, Terry Judd, Jan Alton, Tim Muntz.  
**Back:** Mike Pfeifer, Sr. Margaret Rose, Jack Kennelly and Msgr. Laliberte.



Msgr. Laliberte at the SMPHS Retreat.



Sister Carol Jean missioning Lisa Schnedler during the missioning service at the SMPHS Retreat.

## Chosen by Christ

Sister Anne Germaine, SMP

Chosen by Christ to live with Him and announce His Good News, we are called:

How special and overwhelming it is when I truly believe or let myself be grasped by the statement, **“Chosen by Christ”** to accomplish with my life these goals:

1. to Live with Him
2. to be commissioned to announce His Good News.

It is all about Him, Christ the Lord who reaches down to me, this little country girl, a farmers daughter, a Sister of Mary of the Presentation to proclaim His Good News of unconditional Love, Victory over sin, the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit by being His Disciple and carrying His torch of LOVE to witness to the world that God is in our midst by living my life of Christ. It doesn't just happen but it is a daily dying and rising in Christ.

St. Paul on the road to Damascus was awakened painfully with this reality as well as the Apostles at the Transfiguration. They were not the same because this encounter with the Divine transformed them to carry the message of the Good News of who Christ was by their lives. They could say, “Jesus, you have set my Heart on Fire” and left everything to follow Him and proclaim His message. The Holy Spirit equipped them. They were no different than you and I. What made the difference in their lives can and does make that same difference in and through us. They in their own weakness could say, “Not I that live but Christ lives in me.” How does this happen I often ask myself in prayer as I

encounter God. How can I become so convinced by the power of the Holy Spirit in my life that the message of Jesus is like the flame that burns so brightly in and through me that people recognize that no matter how dark this world becomes there is HOPE.

Our Constitutions give us several ways to keep the flame burning. I want to share a few of them.

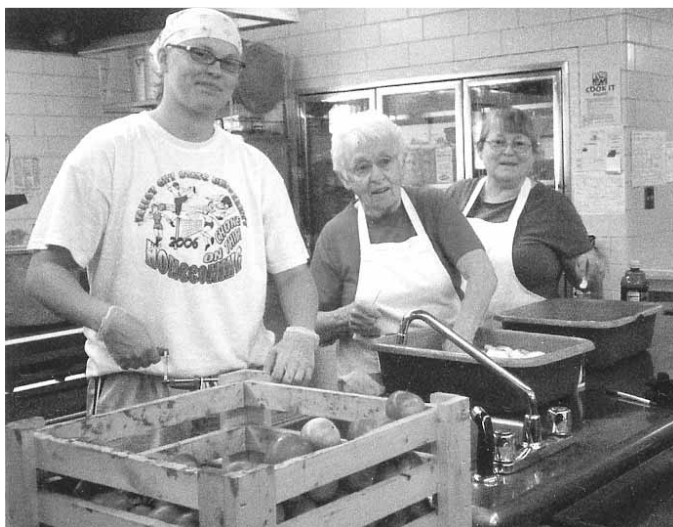
- C.1) tells us that by the power of the Holy Spirit we were founded...
- C.2) tells us that with the Virgin Mary, in faith, availability to the Spirit, we offer our entire being to God...
- C.3) tells us that we participate in evangelization by devoting themselves to the salvation of the people of God.
- C.5) calls to live the gospel in a radical sense....
- C.10) Attentive to the Word, sensitive to human realities... and in a spirit of availability seek personally, together and as Church to discern the will of God...

These are only a few points of our Way of Life that calls us to a profound personal encounter with God in personal prayer and communal prayer.

- C.44) tells us that the Eucharist is the center of our lives and enables us to enter into communion with the Paschal Mystery of Christ...

I have been deeply blessed these past number of years to live in local communities where we took seriously the invitation through the General

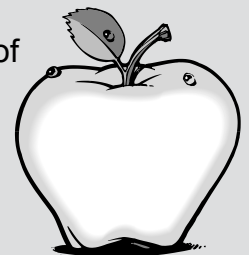
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## Three Generations!

Associates Jean Swenson, and her mother, Lynn Baumann, along with Jean's daughter, Kelly, work tirelessly on peeling and slicing apples for future apple desserts. They also picked the apples and brought them to us.

We are very appreciative of their donation and dedication.



and Provincial Chapters to renew ourselves for the Mission given us as Sisters of Mary of the Presentation through more dialogue with another.

We have been blessed with our Directed Retreats over the years that have taught us and encouraged us to spend time encountering Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit in personally praying the Scriptures. Our Constitutions states in C.54 that we share with one another our apostolic life, the hopes and difficulties of that life. I have found that sharing weekly on this level as reflective living that I am so enriched by my sisters and empowered to continue my walk with Christ as His disciple and strengthen to go forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. Another way that I keep the fire burning is that daily as Sr. Elaine and I pray our vespers we read the Gospel of the next day and pause afterwards and take some time to share what we see, what we heard and what we felt. What is Jesus saying in this passage to us? It is an encounter with the living God with one another and that feeds our personal prayer and mission. We are met by Christ like the disciples of Emmaus. This encounter doesn't just stay in the chapel... it goes out with us as we live our lives together, serve one another and as we go into our ministries.

Another way I feel that as Province we are continually renewed for the Mission is through our Renewal Meetings. I feel we have greater respect for one another and are able to listen more with the heart of Jesus to each other. These meetings make us more aware of one another in our ministries and the broader Congregation as we study and address issues presented to us. It is in dialogue and openness to one another that "...the fire of your Happiness in me, enkindles others" I want to close with a quote from St. Maria Skobtsova that I feel fits here as I reflect on the council of the Congregation's Message.

"I am your message, Lord. Throw me like a blazing torch into the night, that all may see and understand what it means to be a disciple." And may I add a Sister of Mary of the Presentation.

It is about Him, the Lord...it is His message... and I need to keep reminding myself His words, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my Power is revealed in your weakness." 2 Cor.12:9 This is what enable me to live with Christ and to Announce His Good News.

## "Our Sisters Had Guts"

### *Our History*

In Our Way of Life article C.4 reads "Courageously faithful to the gospel and attentive to the signs of the times, the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, today as yesterday, strive to realize the two-fold thrust of the origins:

- to live, in community the rewards and demands of religious consecration
- to respond, in faith, to the needs of the Church and of a world in evolution."

For Louise and Laurence, to be a religious was very important, so much so that they told Fr. Fleury that if he did not let them be religious they would go to join a community in the vicinity.

One of the five themes from the General Chapter for our study and implementation is Community Life For the Mission. In the statement of this theme a quote from Fr. Ambruster's study of our Documents "Open to the Spirit" is quoted and that is, "The Apostolic project will always be first for you.. but it is assumed by religious." (Page 5) From these two statements we have the two-fold thrust and tension that continues to exist for us to this day. How does this relate to the task before us of attracting persons to our community?

Last Summer, in dialogue with my retreat director, I shared about the strength and courage of our sisters during the times of war and expulsions, stripped of community goods, sisters incarcerated in a prison camp and the journey to a new world. His response was, "Your sisters had guts. That should be your vocation motto: "Our sisters got guts." Now we may not want to use that phrase publicly but the reality of its meaning is very true. Do we still have that strength, courage, determination, drive that can take us through anything because we are centered in God? This is what simplicity means to us, being centered in God.

I have two references to illustrate "our sisters got guts," part of which I want to share with you:

1. Our sisters in Portland, Oregon. Quite by accident I came across this book in our library, [A Point of Pride: The University of Portland Story](#), by James T. Covert, a Professor of History at the University. This book portrays the beginnings and development of the university. The book gives a picture of 15 "Sisters of the Presentation" as they arrived in Portland from France to begin their domestic duties at Columbia." Columbia was the early name of the university.

In another reference, we read, "The closing of the farm, moreover, foreshadowed the departure of the Sisters of the Presentation in 1940; and their self-sacrificing service for nearly forty years was truly heroic. In the words of one faculty member: "They thrived on prayer and work.. and many of them felt they were on a mission-a kind of foreign mission."

2. Newspaper article of Jesuit, Fr. Howell from The Seattle Times September 12, 2009. The title of the article is "North Dakota Nuns Provided an Education to Last a Lifetime." Fr. Howell is writing at the beginning of the academic year at Seattle University and remembering his school days at "a little Catholic grade school in Lisbon, N.D." He says that there were only three classrooms for 87 students in eight grades. Some of the students were boarders who lived in the dormitory. One of the noteworthy comments made by Fr. Howell is, "What I recall most of all is the

impressive dedication of the five Sisters of Mary of the Presentation who ran the school. The founding sisters came to the United States from France in 1903 driven out by the secularist Third Republic when all religious orders were suppressed (once again). We were the beneficiaries of these exiled, energetic, hardworking women." Fr. Howell mentions Sister Louise "one of the founding nuns" who was the cook and who "provided a big, welcome lap, along with a fresh cookie, for a kid in trouble or for someone having a tough time at home."

The author describes his learning experiences at the school and the many different things the sisters did to keep the school running smoothly. He says he "relished school" and each day began with the Pledge of Allegiance and a half-hour of catechism class. He further mentions what he learned in these sessions and spends some time commenting on what was learned through the catechism question, "Why did God make you? God made me to praise, reverence, and serve him in this life and to be happy with him in the next." Fr. Howell expands on each point of that statement and concludes by saying that 60 years later he still remembers importance of what he learned. He finishes his article with, "The nuns who taught me in grade school didn't expand on all the explanations but their generous lives embodied cheerful praise, profound reverence, and heartfelt service."

There are many other tributes we could give to our early sisters

and to all who were and are today examples of that same spirit. There is much that we can continue to learn from them. Those women we wish to attract to our Community are invited to enter into the spirit of those who thrived on prayer, were on a mission and gave praise, reverence and service. These "sisters got guts."



Sisters of the Mary of the Presentation as they arrive in Portland from France in 1903 to begin their domestic duties at Columbia University.



St. Mary's Convent, constructed in 1903, was the campus residence hall for the Sisters of the Presentaion; after the nuns left the University, it served as a dormitory for priests until it was razed in the 1960's.



St. Aloysius School in Lisbon

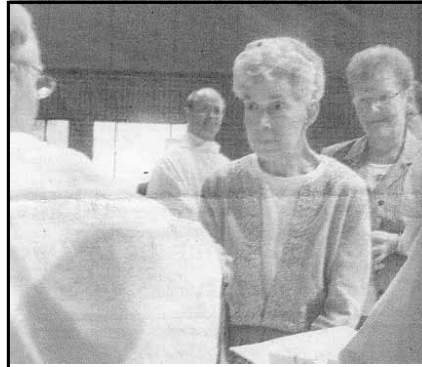
## Crookston Diocese Holds a Synod June, 2010 By Sister Debra

At the Chrism Mass in 2009 Bishop Michael Hoeppner of the Diocese of Crookston, MN convoked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Diocesan Synod which was held in June of 2010 during our Centennial Year. A preparatory Committee worked hard with the preliminary details for over a year. They sent to parishes questions on five areas of parish life. Each parish held one or more parish discussions led by trained facilitators. The ideas that surfaced were sent to the diocese and the Bishop, with the Preparatory Committee revised the questions for the Deanery discussions where each parish sent delegates. After the five Deanery discussions the results were given to the Bishop and he formulated the following 5 topics that would be the focus of the Synod discussions.

1. Meeting Christ – Living Catholic Faith today
2. The Domestic Church: Meeting Christ – Living Marriage and Family life.
3. Meeting Christ – Praising Christ Together- The Church at Prayer
4. The Parish
5. Living Christ – Bringing Christ to the World

The Synod was comprised of 40 laymen and woman from around the diocese (8 from each of the 5 deaneries), 20 of the 32 priests (active and retired), 6 religious women (3 Benedictines, 2 Sisters of St. Joseph, and myself), and 5 deacons. The women religious and the deacons were appointed by the Bishop. Before the Synod began the delegates had 2 afternoons of Orientation. We then gathered on Pentecost Sunday for a Special Mass where each one took an oath of Fidelity. A Synod, which is the highest act of governance in a diocese, is actually a process for long range planning. This process took place after a year of prayer and dialogue in the parishes.

The actual Synod days were June 2-4, and June 10-11. They were deeply rooted in prayer. It was a very powerful spiritual experience. All



Sr. Debra Berry receives a Bishop's Medal of the Diocese of Crookston in appreciation for her work at the Synod. All Synod members receive medals at the June 11 Mass, concluding the Synod.

of the members had spent many hours in preparation as they were each given a big binder of articles to read and pray with. Each was encouraged to write "interventions" on one or more of the topics and to submit them for consideration at the Synod. Each was also invited and encouraged to make a spoken "intervention" during the Synod days.

The Synod days were long and intense ones of listening with an open heart and minds as each expressed their thoughts on each topic. The days began with either Morning Prayer or the Eucharistic liturgy. After each "intervention" there was a reflective pause of a couple of minutes so the members could process and absorb what had been expressed. At the beginning of each session a prayer to Mary was offered. The days ended with either Evening Prayer or the Eucharistic liturgy. It was truly a spiritual experience where one could sense the presence of the Spirit. When it came time for the voting on the goals and objectives there was an overwhelming consensus on each topic! These goals and objectives were given to the Bishop for his prayerful study. With all the ideas he plans to write a Pastoral Letter outlining the future direction for the diocese.

Another striking aspect was the wonderful hospitality that was extended by the Cathedral of Crookston parishioners who hosted the Synod and the Diocesan Staff who helped with the serving the meals and cleaning up.

Without a doubt it was a privilege and honor to have been asked to be part of something so hopeful for our Church. The goal of the Bishop is to have the Pastoral Letter written by the end of December.

# Communal Discernment and The Vow of Obedience

Sisters Marlyss Dionne, SMP

Special guest speakers at our October 16 Province Community Days, Sister Mary Jo Welter and Sister Mary Kay Gosch, School Sisters of Notre Dame, gave an inspiring and challenging presentation on living the Vow of Obedience in community. God's will is paramount in our lives. We discover God's will through the various aspects of community: Constitutions, Charism, Chapters, Leadership in Community and Community members. Through the practice of discernment in community we seek to know and to follow God's Will. Jesus gives us examples, recorded in scripture, where He sought to do God's Will above all else- "My food is to do the Will of the One Who sent Me." We look to Jesus as he "worked out" His obedience to the Father. Out of His intimacy with His Father, Jesus was sent out to do God's Will and He became the Revelation of God. For Jesus, to be obedient was always to do the most loving thing. We were reminded that doing God's Will does not have to be doing the "harder" thing – otherwise, we could ask ourselves: "Do we have a hard God who is most demanding?"

Through loving intimacy with God we learn to love ourselves tenderly and to love others with acceptance. Love always sends us out.

There are three consistent elements of Obedience by which we seek to know and to do God's Will: 1) participation and co-responsibility of each Sister, 2) the service of authority, 3) our historical context – in the realities of our here and now existence. Our Constitutions – "Our Way of Life" – speak to us of how Obedience is lived in community – some examples quoted:

"Attentive to the Word, sensitive to human realities, and in a spirit of availability for the apostolic mission of the congregation, the sisters and superiors seek personally, together as Church, to discern the will of God with that Freedom given by the Holy Spirit? (C10)

"Obedience and service of authority can be lived only in a common desire for union with the will of God, at the level of discernment, of decision and of action" (C13)

"Co-responsibility reminds each sister of her own responsibility for the realization of her vocation and of the common mission." (D,12.)



Sr. Mary Jo Welter and Sr. Mary Kay Gosch

We reflected on some necessary actions for vital membership:

- to be able to recognize the variety of ways God calls us and to trust the movements of our hearts;
- to be aware of finding these movements in private and communal prayer;
- to share our faith and gifts with each other – "We receive each other as gift";
- to seek an atmosphere of joy, peace, attentiveness, and active participation.

Obstacles to discernment include: poor listening habits, fear, hurt, anger, indifference, apathy and prejudging what others will say before they even speak.

Discernment requires reflective listening, prayer and dialog. Authentic dialog requires prayerful reflection. Openness and readiness to change is important. We need to be willing to work together, to trust the good will of each Sister and to compromise because what we hold in common also holds us together.

Three handouts for reflection and sharing were given to each Sister. These helped us to discern how we are living out our vow of Obedience in community today. A closing thought, "Joy is the most visible sign of authentic community life", challenges us to witness that joy to all those whose lives we touch.

# Maryvale Festivities – December 12, 2010

By Sister Marlyss Dionne, SMP



Raffle Items

The day dawned without snow in the air, sunny calm but very cold!! With no prediction of a pending storm, we considered ourselves blessed and looked forward to a wonderful day for our special event – “Maryvale Festivities.” After an early Mass and breakfast, we were eager to do the last minute preparations before opening our doors from 10:00 – 3:00 to the guests who would join us. It was a day of visiting, work and adventure in a new undertaking – an event replacing Holly House which had been our tri-annual event since the 1970’s. We were happy to have approximately 200 guests in attendance at the Maryvale Festivities.



“Scrumptious” Brunch

Lots of preparation and work went into the wrapping of 87 silent auction gifts, thousands of Raffle tickets sold by the Sisters, Associates and friends, the fantastic bakery goods from the Maryvale Kitchen that we had been smelling for weeks and begging to taste, the creation of signs to guide our guests along the way, the scrumptious brunch and delicious desserts that were served by Sisters, Associates and friends, and the bake sale that had such a variety of tasty treats, breads, pies, and numerous other delicious goodies. We are most grateful to all, the Maryvale employees and Sisters, our Sisters in mission, the Associates and friends who brought baked goods, gifts for the silent auction and helped to serve and work at the various activities. We also express sincere thanks to the Valley City businesses that donated items for the Silent Auction. A joint effort made the day a fantastic success!



Silent Auction

As a first experience with the Silent Auction, we were pleased to see the number of folks who signed for the items. Actually all but 4 of the 87 items were sold by the end of the day! The Brunch was delicious and scrumptious, (as advertised!), and this was testified by many guests, Associates, and the Sisters.

The Raffle was a huge success, thanks to the many persons, from near and far, who were involved in the selling of tickets.

With hearts full of gratitude we ask God’s special blessings on all persons who attended the events, and on those who helped in any way to make this first Maryvale Festivities a great success!



Bake Sale Cashiers:  
Barb Berentson and  
Sr. Carol Jean



Servers for Brunch:  
Joyce Hafner, Jerri Holzer,  
Sr. Mary Jane, JoAnn Schmidt



Drawing for Raffle:  
Co-Cordinators  
Sr. Rose Therese and Sr. Marlyss



## Maryvale Festivities

### Door Prizes Winners:

Janet Schultz  
Don and Kathy Bunce  
Jo Koch  
Jake Dosch  
Barbara Berentson

### Raffle Prize Winners:

Hand-Knitted Afghan  
Bruce Davidson  
Fargo, ND

Peace-Wreath  
Cross-Stitched Tablecloth  
Mike Pfeifer  
Fargo, ND

4 Piece Knitted Baby Set  
Beth Huseth  
Harvey, ND

Holly Cross  
Stitched Tablecloth  
Linda Bursenger  
Rolla, ND

5 Piece North Dakota Coal  
Nativity Set  
Kathy Eckart  
Harvey, ND

19" Flat screen TV  
Francis Hafner  
Valley City, ND

Wood Carved Wall Hanging  
Rodger Nichols  
Fargo, ND



## Sponsorship Institute

### Creating a Future: The Evolving Transformation of Sponsorship

The Catholic Health Care Association sponsored a seminar for those in Catholic sponsored ministries, March 24-26 in St. Louis, MO. Attending were those sponsoring health care, education and other Catholic ministries. Sister Suzanne Stahl, SMP attended, representing SMP.

Sister Juliana Casey, IHM opened the conference reflecting on two scripture stories:

- The Rich Young Man; and
- The Acts of the Apostles asking "Who are we? Where must we go? Who are these people (gentiles)?"

She encouraged us to think of change, its gains and losses and not being in control. She indicated that true change calls us to conversion/metanoia. In answering the question, "What must we do?" her response was, "Trust God, each other, others and the future" and "pay attention to the 'presence of the kingdom of God' in our stories". To learn more about this presentation contact Sister Carol Jean (carol.kuntz@fargodiocese.org or 701-845-2864) who has a number of CDs of this presentation to share with others or order a copy from Catholic Health Association at [www.chausa.org](http://www.chausa.org).

Sister Patricia Wittberg, SC presented *Shifting Relationships: Where We Have Been* to participants. She gave an overview of Religious Life beginning with the Hermits of 300 A.D. to today's situation. Sister Patricia said as, "The decline of the old, assimilation of Catholics, societal changes, organizational changes such as professionalization, bureaucratization, fewer religious sisters and brothers that sponsorship changes." She pointed to the rise of new Religious Orders/Congregations and the rise of the laity to leadership in Catholic ministries. She referred to a 2009 study compiled by the Center for Applied research in the Apostolate which indicates that those 28 years old or younger very much prefer and are attracted to Religious Orders because of:

<u>28 Years and Younger</u>	<u>Attracted Because</u>	<u>49 Years and Older</u>
65-70%	Community Life	50-61%
56%	Its Mission	57-72%
66%	Its Practice Regarding a Religious Habit	34-39%
92%	Living with Members	74%
94%	Praying with Members	81-90%
77%	Working with Members	53-71%
89%	Sharing Meals Together	73-81%
83%	Socializing Together	60-75%
29%	Those who preferred at least "a little" living alone	52%

Continued On Page 16

Her use of facts encouraged us to realize that this is a new era demanding new ways of doing things. This presentation led her into the next entitled: *Where are we going?* She said that we need to, "Define 'Catholic' & 'Sponsorship', establish organizational practices to enliven/perpetuate Catholic identity, and incubate change through innovation, creating a protected place, sharing what works and developing incentives to maintain the organizational Catholic identity." She also said that, "One of the primary roles of the sponsors is to maintain relationships with the Church."

Ron Hamel, Ph.D. and Fr. Tom Naim, OFM, Ph.D. addressed us with the *topic Creating the Future: The Sponsor's Role in Assuring Catholic Identity*. They focused on the role of Ethics in this process postulating that "Virtually everything that we do in Catholic health care...has an ethical dimension. Whenever decisions are made or actions performed that affect human dignity and well-being, ethics has a role. This suggests that ethics is an ever-present reality in the day-to-day operations of Catholic health care, not just at the bedside, but throughout the organization." In summary, "In carrying out the ministry in the name of the church, sponsors have an obligation to ensure that ethics practice is integrated deeply into the life of the organization. It should never be viewed as an interesting but peripheral activity. In this, ethicists should have routine, formal and significant interaction with executive leaders and should work in concert with sponsors and mission leaders in advancing Catholic identity in a thoughtful and inclusive way...Ethics practice matters to sponsorship precisely because it contributes to organizational integrity, and is a profound and creative expression of our living tradition."

Other topics addressed included: *Sponsorship and the Future of the Mission Leader* by Brian Yanochick, MA and *The Health Reform and Its Impact* by Sister Carol Keehan, DC President of CHA.

Sr. Suzanne Stahl

## FROM THE PAST:

### *History of Maryvale Part 1 ~ The Beginning*

The concept of Maryvale arose from a necessity of expansion at St. Catherine's School. During the prosperous decades of the fifties and sixties, the school enrollment surged well above the five hundred mark. Living quarters for the teaching personnel were getting crowded because encroaching classroom space was needed to function properly. Mother Marie Madeleine during her visitation to the United States in 1959-1960 had remarked upon seeing the Sisters' living quarters: "My poor Sisters, how you are poorly lodged!" She then advised the Sisters to look for a house not too far from the school as a means of providing more living and especially sleeping quarters for the community. Nothing adequate could be found in the neighborhood and because of some unavoidable difficulties, nothing much was done until 1962 when Mother Eugene Joseph, then Assistant General, was visiting the Sisters. She, too, saw the crowded living conditions and realized the necessity of doing something. His Excellency, Bishop Leo Dworschak, had also advised the Sisters to look for property in order to provide a better youth center for our candidates.

Monsignor Dawson took Mother Eugene Joseph and Mother Mary Edward around the city to find a suitable site, but since it was January, nature was not too inviting and nothing acceptable was found in the nearby area. In the early spring of the year, Monsignor Dawson would occasionally take a group of Sisters in his car and tour the city and its surroundings. Several sites were located but upon investigation, plans for acquisition had to be abandoned because of undesirable features of one kind or another.

One day, John Carlisle, a businessman of Valley City, told Monsignor that he knew of some beautiful property near the Sheyenne River which would qualify for our purpose. In fact, he said that he had often thought of acquiring this piece of land for himself. Off they went about three miles out of town; they crossed a little bridge and had a good look of this farmland. Monsignor Dawson love to relate the incident this way: "It is said that Brigham Young upon arriving at Salt Lake City exclaimed: "This is the spot". I, too, when I saw this place said, "This is the spot."

The next stop was to find out from the farmer at what price he would offer for his property. Monsignor Dawson commissioned John Carlisle and John Gassmann to contact Arnold Bjornson, the proprietor, and make a deal with him. He also told these two gentlemen not to mention who was interested in buying his land for fear that the religious side of it might be an obstacle in securing the land. The atmosphere of ecumenism aroused by Vatican Council II was not at yet too characteristic of the times.

Our two agents contacted Mr. Bjornson to tell him that someone would like to buy his farm. Thinking that a commercial concern was involved, especially that Mr. Carlisle was one of the spokesmen, Mr. Bjornson set his price at \$200 per acre. Monsignor Dawson said it was too much and told the two men that \$60.00 per acre was all the Sisters could afford. After weeks of delay and several more contacts, Mr. Bjornson insisted on knowing who wanted to buy his farm. Finally Mr. Carlisle told him that it was the sisters who would like to buy it. Immediately, this good man who we thought might be prejudiced exclaimed: "Ah! But that is a different story" and right away lowered his price to \$90 per acre. However, Monsignor Dawson still thought it was too much and more delays ensued. Mr. Carlisle from then on left it up to John Gassmann to finish the business deal. One evening Mr. Gassmann said he felt an urge to go and see his friend Arnold. He knew that Mr. Bjornson was eager to sell his farm. His land was rented and the family was living in town. After some discussion, they finally arrived at a compromise between \$90.00 and \$60.00. The price was set at \$75.00 per acre.

The next morning after Mass, Mr. Gassmann went to the sacristy and said to Monsignor Dawson: "The deal is made," Monsignor could not help asking: "How much?" That same morning a call was made to Spring Valley. Both Mother Mary Edward and Mother Helen Marie were there at the time. The latter had just been named Regional Superior at the beginning of the month. The conditions for acquiring the property were explained and permission was given to go ahead.

The question arose to how much of this land should be acquired. Mr. Bjornson believed that if only his best land along the river were bought, he would have to raise his price. Monsignor Dawson advised the Sisters to take the whole farm of

459 acres. It was mentioned at this time that Mr. Carlisle had offered to buy 60 acres as a gift to the Sisters.

After a thorough examination of all legal papers concerning the abstract of the land and the obligations of the former owner had been discussed with John Gassmann and Leo Beauclair, the attorney Monsignor Dawson had contacted, it was decided to close the transaction on the following day. The next day, Friday, June 29, 1962, Feast of the Sacred Heart that year, Mr. and Mrs. Bjornson came to the school and in the presence of Monsignor Dawson, Father Roman Dworschak, Leo Beauclair, John Gassmann, and the Sisters at St. Catherine's School, the contract was drawn and the final agreements settled. Mr. Bjornson then invited the Sisters to tour the land with him. Shortly after 3:00 p.m. all the Sisters who were present at the morning transaction were on their way to tour the newly acquired property. It was truly a great experience to view so much natural beauty.

Much speculation was aroused when the news spread around that the Sisters had acquired land for the purpose of establishing their headquarters. The move became a great topic of conversation. Much credit goes to Monsignor Dawson for gaining not only the support of parishioners, but also for arousing the interest of the businessmen of the city. Mr. Bjornson met with the criticism from a few of his acquaintances for selling the property to Catholic Sisters. Thereupon he replied; "When my children were sick I brought them to the hospital and no one asked my religious affiliation." That was a fine tribute to the Sisters of Mercy.

Part 2 will be continued in the next issue of *MaryNotes*.



# Celebrating A Maryvale Christmas



Phyllis McDonough and Fr. Claude



Sr. Debra and Jean Swenson



Tom and Colleen Musgrave

The Sisters Celebrated Christmas  
with Maryvale Employees



Sr. Marlyss Dionne, Sr. Therese Celine  
and Sr. Ann Louise



Sr. Anne Louise, Sr. Carol Jean,  
Sr. Agnes Marie and Wanda Riser

Sr. Marguerite Guanari enjoys a beautiful end of October day on the bench she received this summer from her family in honor of her 75th Jubilee.

The plaque includes a verse from the Gospel of Matthew: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

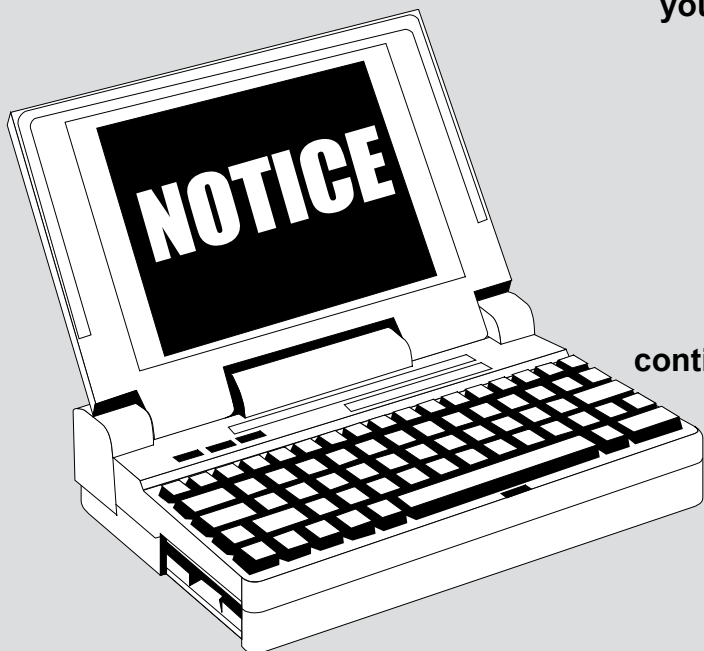


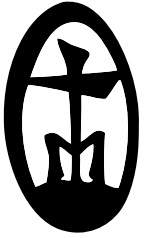
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[carol.kuntz@fargodiocese.org](mailto:carol.kuntz@fargodiocese.org)

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## WOMEN'S RETREAT

The title of the annual Women's Retreat this year is **The Prayer That Jesus Taught**. This prayer, often called the Lord's Prayer, gives us a glimpse into the heart of God. When Jesus taught his followers how to pray he simultaneously spoke of what to pray for. Come to this retreat **March 4-6, 2011**, and let Jesus teach you.



It is a pre-lenten weekend experience but a great preparation to help you enter into lent in a more prayerful way.

**Suggested donation: \$60.00**

**For more information contact:**  
**Sr. Dorothy Bunce**  
**701-845-2865**  
**[dorothy.bunce@fargodiocese.org](mailto:dorothy.bunce@fargodiocese.org)**