

The

Among Us

Word

A stained glass illustration of the Nativity scene. The Virgin Mary is seated on the right, holding the infant Jesus in her arms. The infant Jesus has a halo and his hands are raised. To the left, Joseph is shown in profile, looking towards the child. The background is dark with several white, multi-pointed stars. The entire scene is rendered in a traditional stained glass style with bold black outlines and a limited color palette of red, blue, gold, and white.

CHRISTMAS 2007

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

THE GIFTS

This time of year the world is filled with things that delight our senses. Bright lights sparkle in tree tops and in the windows of homes and shops; even the traffic lights seem to join the festivity of the holiday season. Christmas music fills the air in churches and concert halls and around family fireplaces. Our senses are treated to the delightful aroma of holiday cookies and candies even before we have a chance to savor the delicious treats!

In a world where many rejoice amid an abundance of life's gifts, we are reminded that countless people around the world are without material goods during this season and in every season. Many of our brothers and sisters at home and abroad have suffered life-changing loss: the devastation of war, the loss of life and property in floods and fires, and personal losses of health and employment. These images of Christ "suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind" remind us of our ongoing mission to reveal the compassionate love of God made visible in Jesus to the world.

The child Jesus, born in the most humble of settings, brought the true gifts that are the desire of all the world—rich and poor, young and old, well and ill alike. The gifts he gives do not simply delight our senses; they fill our restless hearts. God's gifts of peace, joy, hope, and love were first revealed in the face of the Christ Child in his mother's arms in a stable; the fullness of those gifts were given by the Savior embraced by that same mother at the foot of the cross. The invaluable and eternal gifts of God are the only things which can truly satisfy our deepest longings at Christmas and every day of the year.

During this holy season, we wish you every blessing. May you and your loved ones experience the deep joy and the true gifts of Christmas revealed in the One named Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, and Prince of Peace.

Praised be the Incarnate Word!



Sister Kathleen Howard, General Councilor



The Word Among Us

The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston, Texas,

publishes *The Word Among Us* three times a year for our Sisters, CCVI Associates and friends. Through the words and pictures in each issue, we celebrate and give witness to the presence of God in our world as we share experiences from our ministries and our lives.

TAMBIÉN ESTÁ DISPONIBLE EN ESPAÑOL



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sistersofcharity.org**

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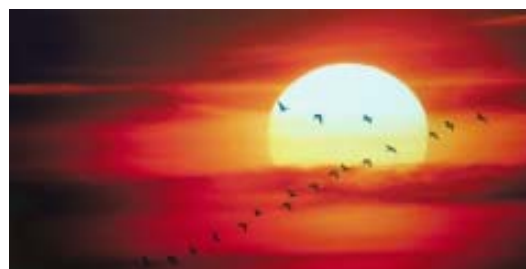
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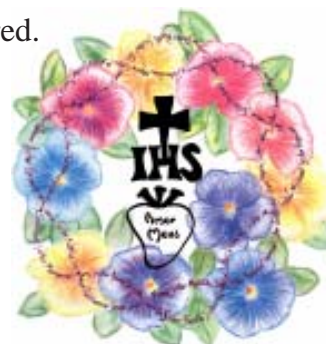
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A Christmas Story



My name is Adela and I would like to share my story. My husband, five year old child and I made the ultimate sacrifice when we decided to leave our families and sell everything we owned in Mexico to come to the United States in 2002. It was very hard physically, emotionally, and financially for us all, but we did it so that we would have a better and more promising future.

It was difficult to be separated from my mother and family, especially around Christmas time. Also, we were struggling financially and didn't have money for presents for our little boy. It was sad to see him do without a toy that he could call his own.

Now, five years later, I am studying English and also taking a Spanish literacy class at the CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center in Houston. Ultimately I want to get my GED.

This Christmas is a very special one because I recently gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. I now have three boys: a 9 year old, 2 year old, and a two-week old.

The CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center, where we receive medical care and help in learning English, has a wonderful Christmas Party each year. Through the generous support of the staff, friends, and the Nun Run, a special event which raises money for the Center, families such as ours receive much needed help.

At the Christmas Party my children were given toys that they treasure and enjoy. It was truly priceless to see their happy faces when they opened their presents. Plus they enjoyed all the festivities at the party, including face painting, snacks, and fun with crafts. Of course, they had their picture taken with Santa Claus. Their Santa picture reminds me of how far I've come. Their happy faces fulfill me and their glowing happiness is transferred to me in so many ways.

Also, at the Christmas Party, we were given a gift card that allowed me to buy our Christmas dinner.

This Christmas Day when we count our many blessings, my family will give thanks to the CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center.



The annual Christmas Party at CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center has become a special event of gargantuan proportions. On the day of the party, the entire center is turned into one big celebration. Hosted by the staff and volunteers at the Center, and assisted by a large group of devoted friends, the party offers Christmas cheer to families who otherwise might have little in the way of gifts for their children during the holiday season. The Center serves a large immigrant population in Houston.

The annual event (now in its 16th year) treats about 600 children to a variety of holiday offerings. It is a progressive party of sorts, starting with registration, drawings for door prizes, and then moving on to pictures with Santa. After that it is on to arts and crafts where the little ones, assisted by Santa's elves, make decorations for their Christmas trees. The children and their families then enjoy refreshments and entertainment with cartoon characters singing and dancing. The final stop is Santa's toy closet where a gift certificate for Mom and toys for the children await.

According to Sister Rosanne Popp, Medical Director of the Clinic, the CHRISTUS Associates take pride in preparing for the party. She explains, "Everyone strives to bring the real Spirit of Christmas into a little corner of the world. The generosity of so many people sharing of themselves to bring joy to others speaks of the real meaning of Christmas. In some small manner the Word made flesh is being manifest to all, the givers and the receivers alike...because for many it is in the giving that the greatest gift is received."

The joy that the staff and volunteers at CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center bring to so many children is priceless. They are to be commended for hosting the annual Christmas Party. These good people exemplify the spirit of giving.

It is so important to give a child a gift, no matter how small. It is not the material things that count; it is how you present it and how much heart you put into the giving. The Center truly gives so many families the spirit of Christmas, making this season the most beautiful time of the year.

We must never lose sight of what Christmas is about: the birth of Jesus Christ. We must teach our children the importance of His birth.

My name is Maria Teresa and I celebrate Christmas with my children and grandchildren. We embrace Christmas with family and friends and give thanks for the CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center for touching so many happy, young lives.

My name is Virginia and I'm from Mexico. I've been calling Houston home for 10 years now. I have three children, ages 10, 14 and 15 years old. I live with my brother and his wife along with his three children.

Christmas is my favorite time of the year. It is now a big family celebration. For many years we celebrated Christmas without my brothers and my mother because they were in a different country. It was hard not to have our family together.

Christmas means family time, and I am grateful to have my family together in one place. Retelling our youth stories to our children and teaching them about family unity is a beautiful experience and an important one. As we celebrate the birth of the Son of God, it is also a time to truly give thanks for our family and the many blessings we have received. Our family has come so very far and are so grateful to be here.

We are pleased to count the CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center as one of our many blessings. The Christmas Party has especially meant a lot to my family. It is a wonderful event because it allows my son to be part of the Christmas festivity. Our favorite activity is arts and crafts, but, of course, he enjoys having his picture taken with Santa Claus. I have enjoyed watching my son have such a wonderful time at the party and seeing his face light up when he receives a present. He is making memories that he will forever hold close to his heart. I am happy because my son is happy. I believe other mothers will understand my deepest feelings of joy because, thanks to the Southwest Community Health Center, my son is able to participate in the excitement of Christmas.





*By Sister Mary Brenda, OP
Houston Dominican Sisters*

During the past two years, I have been privileged to be part of a wonderful collaborative ministry with the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word (CCVI). Both the CCVIs and my Congregation, The Dominican Sisters (OP) of Houston, are based in Houston, Texas; however, the collaborative ministry is located in Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa.

Both of our Congregations are partners in saying “yes” to a third party with a big dream. The third collaborating entity is a small Catholic outreach parish near Nairobi, in a village called Utawala. This parish had a dream to bring a quality and dignified health care clinic to an underserved region of Nairobi and to do it as a witness of support and care by the people of the Catholic Church.

One of the major challenges of this dream was the fact that the parish has very few resources. Yet, what they do have is a lot of faith, hope and courage. I’d also say they have a healthy dose of “Holy Boldness” for starting a project without the means to complete it.

Luckily for the people of Utawala, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word are good at paying attention to dreams, especially the dreams of the poor. They are good at listening, discerning, and figuring out how to make impossible dreams become a reality. And they are good at getting others to join them. That is how I got involved.



The new truck



Road before development



Our 250th patient!

In 2005, the parish priest in Utawala asked for a Sister Nurse who could serve as the Administrator in getting a clinic up and operating. When the CCVIs didn't have a Sister available to respond to this call, they didn't stop looking. With one phone call to my leadership team, the CCVIs helped this dream take another step to reality by involving the Dominican Sisters, and specifically, me.

At that time, going to Kenya was not even on the radar of my mind. What was God thinking? Kenya? With the CCVIs? For one to two years... or more?

You can imagine the emotional and spiritual dilemma, not to mention confusion. However, being itinerant is part and parcel of the Dominican way of life. Everything in my Dominican formation and training had prepared me for a life of collaboration. What was I waiting for? I was being asked to let the words of our life, become flesh. There was only one possible authentic answer – "Yes."

It was agreed that I would join the CCVI community in Kenya, not

as a CCVI, but as a Dominican Sister, sharing a common religious life with theirs in a shared ministry. This opportunity has proven to be one of the most rewarding and faith-deepening journeys of my religious life today.

Two years ago when I arrived in Utawala, I was greeted only with

the eyes of hope and a half finished building. There was no running water or electricity. A plan for furnishing the building or staffing it had yet to be considered. The

road getting to the clinic was simply an open field through which any passable ground was fair game. What little money that might have been left in the building fund was minimal, and I had no clue of where or how to begin my role as Administrator.

A reasonable person might have been discouraged. But I will never forget the faith of the people of Utawala. They often just smiled at my disbelief and said, "Sister, God will provide. He always does. He won't let us down. He'll provide.



Inspecting the plumbing

You'll see." Indeed, I have learned to see with eyes of faith and eyes of hope.

There were many challenges in getting the clinic up and running. One of the most basic and difficult challenges had to do with the roads in Kenya. Both figuratively and in fact, there are no easy roads in Kenya. The physical infrastructure of roadways in Kenya is very poor. Pot-holes, road erosion, and traffic jams require hours to get anywhere. Once you do arrive, the roads of bureaucracy are also difficult. In government, business and church, it seems a committee is required to process anything. This cultural reality of involving many people and many steps to decide or approve important things has caused me to learn a greater sense of patience, and to re-learn the art of listening, waiting, negotiating and expecting.

In November and December of 2006, the road to Utawala was nearly impassible due to the rains and the soaked black cotton soil. Thanks to the gift of a truck, paid for in part by CHRISTUS Health, I was able to at least get close to the clinic. The workers and I began using the truck to haul lumber, sand, cement, rock and other heavy



supplies. We also gathered small rocks from a distant roadside and brought them back to the clinic to help build an access path through the mud in anticipation of receiving our shipment of medical supplies for the clinic to open.

Today the clinic, St. Bakhita Dispensary of Utawala, is finished, furnished, and open for service providing patient consultation, laboratory diagnosis and a full time pharmacist. There is running water, electricity and even a permanent passable road leading right to the main entry of the clinic. There is also an underground water tank to collect reserve rain water for times of drought. Although the hours and services are still small scale according to what is needed, a dream has been realized.

Officially the clinic opened in July 2007, and we have received a constant and steadily growing number of patients. People are coming with confidence that they will receive caring, quality and

affordable health care – and they are spreading the word. That vote of confidence is our best form of advertisement.

The staff and the day-to-day workers at the clinic are amazing people. They have helped in the raising of the clinic as much as anyone has. They have set a great example in taking ownership of this dream of health care for the people of Utawala and they live their commitment every day. There isn't anything they wouldn't do to assist me in keeping the clinic running.

I wish you could see the difference the clinic makes in the lives of the employees. Jobs restore their dignity and put smiles on their faces. For a young man or woman, having a job means the family can eat and the rent will be paid.

Throughout the building process, the people of the parish have been a constant source of defiant hope. Even in the midst of the most

ridiculous struggles or adversity they have never lost hope. The Catholic Community of Utawala is very proud of St. Bakhita Dispensary. These hard-working people are happy and excited that their dream has finally become a reality. A few years ago they built a small Catholic Church which is now a nice permanent building. But the new clinic is truly a beacon of hope for them since it is the only quality health centre in the area. The word Utawala means the “act of leading” and the Catholic community is



demonstrating that they are leaders in their village.

And then, there are the people of Utawala themselves, the people served by the clinic. Their gratitude and patronage of St. Bakhita tell another part of the story. They live in an environment where dreams and hopes thrive. For some it is the dream of an education, for others it might be the dream of meaningful and sustainable employment. Sometimes it is a hope that a village might receive electricity, water and reliable health care. For many others it is the dream of owning their own plot of land so they can build a home and grow a garden to feed their family. For those orphaned or displaced, it is the dream of having a place and a family with whom you can feel secure, loved and at home. And for those committed to sharing a common, Christ-centered life, it is the dream of healing and building up the kingdom of God. By being involved in this collaborative journey with the CCVI's and the Parish Community of Utawala Catholic Church my life has been affected and moved by each one of these dreams.

My reflection on this collaboration with the CCVIs would not be complete without saying how much I am blessed by my community



With children at Elizabeth Place Children's Centre

accommodations. I reside with the CCVI Sisters at Elizabeth Place Children's Centre, a home for twenty-two children orphaned as a result of AIDS. The children are such a breath of fresh air after a hard day at the clinic. They seem to bless me with a balanced perspective on life and help me to rediscover the simple things that matter. I know I laugh more, I breathe more calmly and find time to play because of them. They certainly help me to pray with deeper gratitude and to have a more focused concern for our world's future.

As I look back over the past two years, saying "Yes" was the only natural thing to do and I have just renewed my commitment to this collaborative journey for another two years.

Talking the talk of collaboration is one thing, but doing the work of collaboration is quite another. It isn't necessarily about

each participant bringing an equal share of goods to the table. Rather, it is more about each participant showing up at the table and saying, "Here I am. These are the gifts I have. I have come to walk this journey with you." If I have learned one thing about mission it is this: Mission is never done in isolation



Medical warehouse



Laboratory



Parishoners at Clinic

– we are in it together... many hands, many hearts, many dreams, many struggles, and many, many prayers. "Tuka pamoja" is Kiswahili meaning: "We are together." It takes all of us working together.

Pregnant with Dawn

By Pat Kerwin



Pat Kerwin is the Director of Spirituality in Ministry for the Congregations of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word Houston and San Antonio.

We humans are creatures of light! Our very body functions are tuned to the circadian rhythms of daylight and darkness. Scientific studies document the physical and emotional ailments that are directly attributable to a diminishment of light either by the natural shortening of days or by some artificial manipulation of the environment. Those who live in extended periods of darkness such as persons working in Polar Regions, are acutely aware of the impact of light deprivation on their spirits.

When we are “out of the light,” we become disoriented, confused, and fearful even in the most familiar surroundings. We’ve all had the experience of coming into a darkened room, groping our way along, reaching out for a familiar door knob or piece of furniture that will help direct our steps until we can reach the switch and turn on the light. In the dark we see, hear and imagine all sorts of fearful things that dissipate with a little light.

Unlike previous generations who accepted the changing periods of light brought about by the cycle of seasons, we have now learned to

manipulate our clocks and calendars to capture a maximum of daylight hours—we call it “daylight savings.” Time is a medium of exchange to buy us another luminous hour. We Spring forward to give us more hours of daylight for work and play in the growing season and vacationing times of year. We Fall back in the cold months of winter when the earth lies fallow.

Genesis 1 tells in heroic imagery the origins of the created world. God’s first act of creation was light. “Let there be light,” proclaimed the Creator....and there was light! From this first light the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night took form. All life forms grew and developed in the light; from the most basic cellular beings, to every kind of bird, fish, and mammal, to the human person created in God’s own image, creation was attuned to light.

Perhaps our affinity for light is rooted in that very truth—the remembrance that we are created in the image of God, who is Light itself. God who first called forth light from darkness reveals himself as Light throughout salvation history. God spoke to Moses in the flame of the burning bush; he led



the Israelites by a pillar of fire—light in the darkness of night. And, in the fullness of time, the radiance of a star led shepherds and sages alike to the humble crib of a Child. It was this Child, born in the cover of darkness, who was destined to be a “light for the nations.”

Dom Helder Camara, the late Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Brazil and a powerful voice for the poor, once wrote: “In the middle of the night. When stark night was darkest, then you chose to come.... Lord, you were born in the middle of the night because midnight is pregnant with dawn.”¹ Into a world made dark by sin, the eternal Light burst forth with the radiance of day.

¹ *In the Middle of the Night* from *It's Midnight, Lord,* The Pastoral Press, Washington, D.C., 1984.

“What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1: 4-5

Sometimes we are tempted to be discouraged by the pockets of darkness in our world today. We live under the daily alarm of orange and red alerts—reminders that peace and security are only an illusion. We witness the tremendous suffering of brothers and sisters whose lives are torn apart by war, poverty, hunger, natural and human-made devastation of every kind. We have family and friends who are bearing the pain of illness, grief, and loss. In these moments when darkness seems to be all around us, we must hold on to the truth that it is precisely into such darkness that

Light has come. The true Light of the World, Jesus, the Incarnate Word, has shed his radiance upon all human life transforming even death into life eternal. No matter how dark the present moment may seem, with eyes of faith we see that it is pregnant with dawn.

We have “been called out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Truly, we humans are not only creatures of light, we are Children of the Light—made in the image of the one who is Light itself. This is our great hope and our joy! The incarnation of our God has ushered in endless day. In the Light of this eternal day, every pocket of darkness, every midnight, is pregnant with God’s dawn.



Pioneers, Poets & Prophets:

Catholic Sisters in America

*T*he Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is creating a national traveling exhibit to tell the largely untold story of the contributions of Catholic Sisters to the United States. The exhibit, entitled “Pioneers, Poets & Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America,” will use artifacts, photographs and technology to document the influence of women religious on U.S. life and culture.

The exhibit includes a timeline (pictured above) outlining significant moments in the world and U.S. history which parallels the

contributions of U.S. women religious. The timeline for women religious, beginning with the arrival of the Ursuline Sisters in New Orleans in 1727, documents the challenges, achievements, and sacrifices of Catholic Sisters in the U.S.A.

The Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, along with Congregations across the nation, were invited to send photographs and materials for possible inclusion

in the display. The nation-wide response was tremendous.

Recently our Congregation learned that we will be among those mentioned on the timeline in reference to the 1900 Storm. Artwork depicting the great tidal surge of the storm appears to the right of the center of the timeline.

Through this large museum exhibit, visitors will not only gain a better understanding of the contributions of religious life, but also the essence of the vowed life and the driving values of prayer, community, mission and respon-



siveness to the signs of the times and the unmet needs of society.

The idea for this project took root on September 29, 2004 when five Catholic Sisters gathered at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in St. Louis, Missouri to explore the possibility of an exhibit. The dream of this group was a presentation which would demonstrate how Catholic Sisters helped shape the nation and how the nation shaped them.

The LCWR History Committee was formed and Sister Helen Maher Garvey, BVM, was selected chairperson. Design Island of Orlando, Florida was chosen to oversee the design and execution for the exhibit.

In February 2007, the History Committee met with archivists, historians, artists, graphic designers, and producers at Design Island to discuss the overall look and feel of the exhibit as well as to design,

layout, flow and other aspects of the exhibitor space. All agreed that this should be unique, dynamic, interactive, inspirational, and educational.

With a goal of \$3.2 million to complete the project, the committee has announced that more than half has been raised. Generous donations were received from health care systems, hospital foundations, associations, religious congregations, private companies and individuals. One major contributor is the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation which made a \$1 million challenge grant.

Last spring, members from the History Committee exhibited at the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. More than 8,000 people attended the

convention, many of whom were very interested in the Pioneers, Poets & Prophets exhibit. Several visitors exclaimed, “It’s about time,” when they stopped by the LCWR booth and learned about the upcoming museum exhibit.

The History Committee is working with Lord Cultural Resources (LCR) to secure venues for the traveling museum exhibit. LCR has contacts with major museums across the country.

*For updates
on the exhibit,
visit
www.LCWR.org.*

Consciousness in Action

The Institute of Noetic Sciences, a nonprofit membership organization which sponsors leading-edge research into the potentials and powers of consciousness, held its 12th annual international conference in Palm Springs, California, August 8-12. Entitled, *Consciousness in Action*, the conference brought together scientists, visionaries and change makers to create a path forward with new ideas and effective ways to take action.

Among those attending were Sister Margaret Bulmer and Sister Paulette Shaunfield. The following is their report on the conference.

*By Sister Margaret Bulmer and
Sister Paulette Shaunfield*

Consciousness in Action touched on every aspect of life and was very pertinent to our own interests including serving those in need, world peace and protecting our environment. The speakers at the program were excellent, and we want to share highlights from some of the many presentations. The following are brief summaries from four of the speakers.



Sister Margaret



Sister Paulette

Where Does Civilization Go From Here?

In his presentation, Dr. Edgar Mitchell, the founder of IONS, addressed the question: “Civilization: Where To from Here?” He says that we have advanced rapidly during the last 100 years and we will be moving even faster into the future. We are facing either a new period of enlightenment, a new renaissance, or a period of dark ages. The choice is ours and we must be informed about what the choices are.

He explained that we must have a new way of looking at things in relation to our current situation in this “postmodern age.” We need to keep the good things we have done right and put aside destructive things in order to live in a sustainable fashion. Our system is about to collapse inwardly due to its own excesses and lack of challenges from the outside. Our intention creates our reality. We are creators and we have to accept the responsibility to create environment.

Illustration by Nicholas Wilton
Created for IONS. www.zocolo.com



We must move toward a world of cooperation, harmony, justice and respect for each other.

Responding to the question of how he felt on seeing the Earth from space, Dr. Mitchell, who was the 6th astronaut to walk on the moon, said his experience was of seeing things as they really are. He added that the Earth's atmosphere did not cloud his vision.

As he and Alan Shepard were returning home, they saw the Earth, the heavens, the moon, the sun as a panorama of 360 degrees every two minutes as the capsule rotated. Dr. Mitchell said, "I realized that the molecules in my body and my partner's body were manufactured from ancient generations of the stars. Those were my molecules. It was a visceral experience, not an intellectual one, an ecstasy, but I did not know what that was about."

When he returned to earth, he did some scientific and spiritual research. He could not come up with an explanation until Rice University found a paper in Sanskrit that helped him understand. He explained, "You see things in their individual separateness, but experience them viscerally as a unity and this is accompanied by bliss. This was repeated in me many times on the journey back and continues to happen."

Dr. Mitchell added, "Once that happens you are in love with the entire universe and a disaster or violence to any part of that universe is totally unthinkable to you."



Sacred Activism

Andrew Harvey, Professor of Social Activism, spoke on the topic of sacred activism. He said that in order to enter into the mystical passionate heart to serve all, we must renounce our addiction to reason and explanations. We block our power to serve because of fear and fear must be transformed to Divine Love.

In defining sacred activism, he told a story of a poor old black woman in South Africa who was part of the Truth and Reconciliation effort by Bishop Tutu. Her husband and son had been murdered and the man who murdered them was now standing before this old woman. She walked toward the man and asked that he take her to the place where her husband and son had been murdered, so that she could take a little of the dust there as a remembrance. She told the man that she had lost everything, but that her heart was still so full of love to be given away. She asked the man to visit her every month and to be her son. She said, "I forgive you." The man fainted! This was love in action and the man was overwhelmed by it. Professor Harvey said that we all must discover this love and bring it to the world.

Sacred activism is fire for God and fire for Justice. These two must be fused together. It will cost you everything...your addiction to reason, to doing, to analysis of the mind.

In addressing how to put Sacred Activism into action, he offered the Five Flames of the Awakened Heart:

1. Serve God always with deep praise and thanksgiving.
2. Care for yourself as a manifestation of God to the world. Reverence all of creation as the total manifestation of God.
3. Serve all the beings you meet as manifestations of God. Treat everyone with dignity and unconditional love.
4. Do something real in your own community. Allow the pain to enter in and ask yourself which one breaks my heart? Then do something about it. Don't read about it, don't talk about it.....just do it! Let it stretch you.
5. Serve a global community. All our choices impact the world. How do I vote? How do I invest my money? How do I advocate for change?

You might ask what Andrew Harvey is doing about it. He has been invited by the United Nations to start a Global Movement of Sacred Activism, the feminine gift to the world.

The Real Wealth of Nations: Transforming Economics and Our lives

In order to change and expand our consciousness and put it into action through transformation, we must move from a culture of domination to one of partnership, according to Dr. Riane Eisler, President for the Center of Partnership Studies. She states that our economic systems must promote mutual respect and accountability.

In her book *The Real Wealth of Nations*, Dr. Eisler writes that the real wealth is people and nature. Unfortunately, our current economic systems do not value these as the main source of productive activity. For example, work done by mothers in households is not counted in the gross national product. A tree is not valued until it is cut down. In Switzerland they have started counting household work and it is 70% of the GNP! Another example is that a plumber can make between \$50-\$70/hr, and yet someone who takes care of a child makes \$10.00. We require our plumbers to be trained, but not our childcare provider.

We have all kinds of polarities in our culture: East vs. West, Capitalism vs. Socialism, men vs. women. Anything associated with women is of lesser value than the same things associated with men. We are living in an unconscious system. We must become conscious of what we are doing and then we can change. In the domination system there is money for war and weapons, but no money for childcare, parental leave and other “soft issues.”

It has been proven that companies that invest in childcare and have caring policies have a higher return on investment. It is all about changing the language we use. We must start with the family. If children see violence as a way to impose their will on others, they will do the same. We must teach caring to the young.

So what can be done? We need to advocate to our legislators to promote equality between men and women and to vote for caring policies. Dr. Eisler also suggests changing the conversation about economics and begin talking about “caring economics.”

Green-Collar Jobs for Urban America

Van Jones, a graduate of Yale Law School, humorously described his journey from rural Tennessee to his creation of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and his involvement in getting legislation passed for green-collar jobs for urban America.

Starting out as a journalist in Shreveport, Louisiana after his graduation from the University of Tennessee, he came face to face with many injustices. He decided to become a lawyer to do something about it. At Yale he saw undergraduates taking drugs and being put into rehabilitation or sent to Europe. African Americans three blocks away with the same behavior were sent to prison. He believed he had a mandate to help change things.

Once out of law school, he said that he worked 18 to 20 hours a day and went to lots of funerals of young people. He over worked and had a complete breakdown which led him to go to a spirituality retreat. He read and studied, and recognized three

crises in the U.S.: socio-economic, ecological, and spiritual. He says it is not unusual that the country with the most prisons in the world is also the one with the most pollution.

He started a campaign for “green-collar jobs” as a path to economic and social recovery. Many kinds of jobs are included in this: construction work on a green building, organic farming, renewable energy, anything that helps the environment or helps to eliminate pollution. There are many opportunities in this. The Ella Baker Center, an agency for justice, peace and opportunity in Oakland, California, is focusing on a reform of California’s youth prison system and creating jobs. There has been a 30 percent drop in the number of youths in jail since this was started.

At an interview with Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, Van Jones said these four words will help solve problems with youth because they have no jobs: clean, energy, jobs, bill. Recently, the House passed an energy package that will focus on these issues.



Walking with Jesus

Sister Ana Julia Granados Ulloa was born in El Salvador and is currently preparing to become a perpetually professed Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word. During a recent interview for the new Congregational video, Sister Ana Julia offered insight into her spiritual journey with Jesus, the Incarnate Word. This is the third article in the series of interviews made during the video. The other stories were on the Ruah Center by Sr. Adeline O'Donoghue and on Literacy with Sr. Marie Bernarde Clancy.



Interviewer: *When did you first meet members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word?*

Sister Ana Julia: I met the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word (CCVI) for the first time many years ago, when I was very young. Ever since I was a child, I had the desire to be a religious, and when I met the Sisters, I was very impressed with the Congregation's charism, spirituality, and the different apostolates and services in other parts of the world. I was also very touched by their history.

When I read the story about those first three French Sisters who bravely answered the call of Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis in 1866 to begin this mission of the Congregation, I was very moved as I imagined the courage and strength that they had in leaving their own culture and start something new for the good of the people who were suffering.

Would you say that their response is an inspiration to you?

I reflect: "How could these three women leave behind their family, friends and homeland and risk their lives crossing the ocean to come to a land where they didn't even speak the language to care for those who were suffering?" I believe that they did that with the faith, love and inner strength that God was giving to them to serve in the neediest places in the Diocese of Galveston.

The first three Sisters inspire me each day to be Light in the world in which we live and to bring hope even when only death seems to exist.

Do you feel a connection with the first Sisters who cared for others in a country other than their own?

When I reflect on the first three Sisters, I say, "I also come from another culture. I can continue sharing with other people and go forward transforming the world from what I can do, from the grace that God is giving me."

Did that connection help you to choose this Congregation?

I think that God calls each person at their own baptism to serve in a concrete way and to respond freely with the graces received from our Creator. I have felt the call personally to participate in His incarnational mission, precisely in this Congregation where we try to be Gospels of Love in the heart of the world that cries every day for justice, peace and love.



Sr. Ana Julia with a child from IXCAN in Guatemala.

The call of our founder, Bishop Dubuis, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands," is as relevant today as it was more than 140 years ago. Every day I ask God for the grace to faithfully respond to His call in my life as a consecrated person. I am happy to be part of this Congregation and to be called to participate in its incarnational ministry.

So the needs may evolve, but the call is constant?

This is an exciting time, a very interesting time for the Congregation. There are many new emerging realities in the world to which we can respond with our charism and spirituality. Times change and needs change, but Jesus Christ is still suffering in a multitude of persons who seek relief at our hands. That keeps us energized and excited about our ministries which are focused on helping those in need in our times.

How are the underserved in Central America being helped by the Congregation?

That presence of consecrated life, I believe, is very important to spread the love and relief to the poor in the regions where we are. It is significant for the Congregation to be in these areas. We don't just give service. We want our service to make a difference for people.

The Congregation has ministries in El Salvador and Guatemala. Through my mission experience, I have served with the elderly who have been abandoned by their families or friends because they are considered no longer useful to society or because they do not have economic resources to care for themselves. At the same time there are youth and children that are mentally retarded, disabled or with psychological problems, and they are not able to have a job to take care of themselves.

The Congregation also serves in the educational area, especially in El Salvador. We journey with orphan boys and girls or with children that have suffered inhumane situations with their families or neighbors.

I feel that the Congregation is also a voice for these people who cannot speak for themselves and do not play a specific role in society.



How would you describe your ministry working with the elderly in Central America?

I worked for three years with the elderly, or, as we say in my country, people of the third age, in Huehuetenango, Guatemala. For me it was very touching to share with these vulnerable people, and in some cases with physical and mental disabilities. They were rejected from society, but especially from their family and friends.

When I was sent to work in this ministry, I was very happy because it was my first experience with older adults. They have many problems and I was



grateful to work with them, to try to understand their needs and hopefully to make a difference in their lives while we smiled and enjoyed the activities at El Amparo de San José. It was like being able to find God in every face of the elderly.

How did you serve youth in ministry?

I worked for three years in El Salvador with the youth in an educational pastoral program at Oscar Arnulfo Romero School (COAR). It was very interesting to work with them, because I am also young and in some ways I identified with them. I could understand the situation in which they were living and in some way be a witness to their growth and journey as young people. Later, I was missioned in Guatemala where I continued working with the youth in vocations and in the parish with youth groups.

Why is there a growth of this Congregation in Central America?

I feel that the Congregation is growing in Central America because it opens itself to new possibilities and needs, to respond to the signs of the times in Guatemala and El Salvador. I feel that we are a very young Congregation in Central America, but with a lot of hope to give life and to invite others to extend His Kingdom of justice and love. Jesus continues calling us to follow Him and to respond to Him in the concrete realities of Latin America.

Do you think women in Central America are excited about finding God?

Yes. I feel that the youth in Central America try to find God in the realities in which they live.

How would you describe your personal relationship with Christ?

I feel very grateful for all the blessings that God has given me and for always being my companion along the way. I like meeting Jesus like a friend, a person in whom you can put your trust, worries, sorrows, happiness and hopes. Many times it is not easy finding the human Jesus because it brings many challenges to our lives. I believe living on a person-to-person level is significant. Without this experience, I would not be able to discover Him in the faces that I encounter each day in my personal journey.

Jesus is the center of my life. He strengthens me and invites me to share with others his energy and compassion. It is interesting how God manifests himself in my life and invites me to respond to Him in different ways.

When I reflect on the daily Gospel, I discover Jesus' journey with God the Father and His profound way of relating to God. It is a personal encounter from the heart and not from reason. For me, this is also an experience of being alone with the One who created me and formed me even in my mother's womb. It is living the simple and ordinary aspects of life that teach me to walk with humility and compassion, embracing the mystery that seems to be hiding in silence and many times in the suffering. I believe that is the love that Jesus radiates to me, when He shows me His loving Father, who is close to me, listening as my best friend.

How do you share your faith with others?

When I join my faith with life following Jesus, the Incarnate Word, I bring Him to the people with whom I work. By this experience of God, I believe I can inspire other people to follow Jesus.

Sharing my faith is sharing my being and my works with other people. It is an invitation to go beyond myself and be part of the other person in front of me, to talk heart to heart; to share God's life within me.



Personally, I think sharing faith with another person is not simply a job. Sharing faith brings us closer in ways that are not easy to explain. When we share faith we share the cores of ourselves, where God dwells.

To follow in the footsteps of Jesus is the great challenge of life. It is not easy to live in a manner that seems uncertain just as it did for Jesus when His divinity seemed to hide while on the cross. I value the invitation to live the events of my daily life, discovering those profound experiences, finding the beauty of God in all of creation, sharing in his infinite graces and being a bearer of his unconditional love.



In the photograph at the top of the page, Sr. Ana Julia gathers with a youth group. Above, as a mime, she entertains seniors at El Amparo de San Jose. Sr. Madeleva Manzanares is pictured in the center.



Sisters with 65 years or more of religious profession honored

Twenty four of our Sisters who have been professed 65 years or more were honored on All Saints Day, November 1, 2007, at Villa de Matel. The combined years of service of these Sisters as professed members of the Congregation totals 1,762. Each Sister celebrant received a Mass Cenacle Card, a Papal Blessing and a small memento in remembrance of the occasion.

Celebrating 65 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Audrey Walsh
Sr. Corona Farrell
Sr. Ruth Kelly
Sr. Victor Martin

Celebrating 66 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Dominic Sweeney
Sr. Michael Morley
Sr. Frances Therese Whooley

Celebrating 67 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Benita Herlihy
Sr. Eymard O'Connor

Celebrating 68 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Annette McDonagh
Sr. Lucille Desmond

Celebrating 69 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Emily Flaherty
Sr. Leo Moloney
Sr. Margaret Mary Flaherty

Celebrating 70 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Finola Quinn
Sr. Mary Nora Dwan
Sr. Thaddeus Quinlan

Celebrating 71 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Matilda Kelleher

Celebrating 73 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. John Marie Crowley

Celebrating 74 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Celsus Clancy
Sr. Clement Marie Sadlier
Sr. Nathy McGettrick
Sr. Pulcheria Flaherty

Celebrating 77 Years of Religious Profession:

Sr. Clare Marie Mulholland



A Reflection

It was a privilege to participate in the festivities honoring these women. It was not just the accumulated number of years of service, which did take my breath away, but what I heard about each of them as persons.

I was in awe of the snippets of the contributions they have made to individuals, to the ministries, to the Church and to the world. To hear it said of one: "You are the only Bible some folks may read, and you stand out in very bold print." I am proud to hear the story of the first beginnings of nursing schools; to know the first formally educated Sister pharmacists when it was not common for women to do that; to hear of the contribution of bringing about the quality in Catholic education. I was impressed in hearing just a little of the reality of leaving all that is "home" and creating beginnings in a new country, new culture, new language. I wonder at being able to envision and lead us and others into the new expression of corporate responsibility. I am in deep admiration to hear a Sister say: "Now I sit and listen to their needs, their pain and fears. With this you give them yourself. You have to risk listening and feeling their pain and loss." I am better to have to witnessed some of these stories; to see what "presence" means; to see what giving of selves means; to see faithfulness.

Instead of counting the years, I wish I could have known how many lives were touched by all these women. They really are Pioneers, Poets and Prophets! This celebration allowed me to be touched by our history in a palpable manner.

Thank you from all of us who, though somewhat younger, are still being led by and proud of the inheritance you are giving us. --A CCVI

Briefs

IMAGE OF BISHOP DUBUIS PAINTED IN VILLAGE SQUARE

A fresco on a wall overlooking the village square in Coutouvre, France features the image of Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis, founder of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, along with Mother Jeanne-Marie Chavoin, founder of the Marist Sisters, and Louis Mercier, writer and journalist. Great-grand nieces and nephews of Bishop Dubuis were on hand for the unveiling. All three of the famous individuals were born in Coutouvre.



NEW VIDEO AVAILABLE

“Called To Serve,” a new DVD featuring the mission and ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word has been completed and will be ready for distribution by the end of the month.

The 30-minute video describes the Congregation and was produced at the request of Sr. Lillian Anne Healy by TV Man, Inc., with the assistance of CCVI Communications.

The video includes interviews with many of our Sisters and offers insight into our lives as women religious.

Copies of the program will be made available to all Sister Communities, sponsored and co-sponsored facilities, and others upon request. The introduction to the video may be viewed at the Congregation’s website, www.sistersofcharity.org.



WOMEN COME AND SEE

Come and See Retreat Weekend, hosted by the U.S.A. Vocation Team last month, was an experience of prayer, reflection, discernment, telling stories and gratitude for the baptismal call.

Eight women from different ethnic backgrounds, some students and other professionals, came to the Villa de Matel to learn more about religious life in the Congregation. Please pray for these women as they continue to discern their call to religious life.

The members of the U.S.A. Vocation Team are Sisters Maura Theriot, Kim-Phuong Tran, and Mary Patricia Driscoll.

NOW ONLINE

Connections, the monthly newsletter of the CCVI Associates, is now available for viewing online at the Congregation’s website: www.sistersofcharity.org.

HISTORY BOOK COMING SOON

A book telling the story of the CCVI Associates will soon be published. Scheduled for distribution shortly after the first of the year, the book describes the 25 year history of the Associate program, from its beginnings in 1982 to the present.

Its purpose is to celebrate the 25 year anniversary of the Associates, and to highlight the major persons and events that have played a part in this history. It is called "A Love Story," in recognition of the bond



between the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and the Associates, who are united in the love of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. The book has been prepared by Catherine

Wolfer, Shirley Talley, Jo Agnes Blubaugh and her daughter, Mary Theresa Mancha, with the assistance of Linda Macdonald, Director of CCVI Communications.

The publication is based on information from the Associate files and Villa Archives, as well as the input of various Sisters and Associates. It will be mailed out to all Associates and CCVI Communities, and will be available to others on request.

SPIRIT AND LIFE

The next Spirit and Life Conference will be held at Villa de Matel on Saturday, March 15, 2008. The topic will be "Hunger for Justice: An Exploration of the Beatitudes for Our Time." The presenter will be Sister Margaret Mary Kimmons, OSF, who currently heads the Religious Community Outreach at Bread for the World, based in Washington, D.C.

Brochures with more information and registration forms will be available soon. For additional information, contact Pat Kerwin, Director of Spirituality in Ministry for the Congregations of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston and San Antonio, at Villa de Matel.



2008

January 25-26

Leadership in the Ministry of Governance
Workshop Series, Villa de Matel

February 11

World Day of the Sick

March 15

Spirit and Life Conference, "Hunger for Justice: An Exploration of the Beatitudes for Our Time," with Sister Margaret Mary Kimmons, OSF

March 25

Leadership in the Ministry of Governance
Workshop Series, Villa de Matel

April 24-25

CCVI Associates Gathering, Villa de Matel

May 17

Jubilee Celebration for CCVI Sisters, Villa de Matel

July 25

Leadership in the Ministry of Governance
Workshop Series, Villa de Matel

August 1-5

CCVI Assembly, Villa de Matel

RUAH CENTER

Centering Prayer Weekends

January 4-5	July 18-19
February 1-2	August 22-23
March 7-8	September 12-13
March 28-29	October 3-4
April 11-12	October 24-25
May 2-3	November 14-15
May 23-24	December 5-6
June 6-7	



*May this glorious day
of our Savior's birth
resound with hope
and peace on earth!*

Merry Christmas!

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
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