

The *Word* Among Us

SUMMER 2007

SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

A PROPHETIC VOICE

*T*he Mission Statement for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word reads in part: “We take responsibility to read and respond to the signs of the times and to use our gifts in the service of all, especially the poor, oppressed and afflicted. We commit ourselves to upholding the dignity of persons and to promoting justice and equality in our lives and ministries.”

Included in this issue of *The Word Among Us* are several stories which speak about various ministries that address specific needs in and around our communities today. These were prompted from and grew out of the last two Chapters. I’d like to emphasize, in this message, the second directional statement of last year’s Chapter, namely “...we will work in solidarity with the poor and marginalized as we consciously live Gospel values and challenge oppressive structures among ourselves, in society and the Church.”

The Spirit leads us to being a “prophetic voice” at several levels: toward oneself as an individual by inner conversion and living authentically and with integrity; interpersonally in relationships which call us to work with others and building alliances; structurally in addressing the larger systems of which we are a part; and last but not least, at the cosmic level in relation to the entire universe.

Being witnesses of the Incarnation in a consumer society poses many challenges for us as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. If we keep alive the Vision which continually calls us out of ourselves, we may see glimpses of how we can be instruments of advocacy, of giving voice to the voiceless, of being prophets of peace and justice, and of transforming systems and structures.

When we as a Congregation and as individual members can work to revitalize our Incarnational Spirituality in becoming more vibrant and holistic, we can hopefully create communities which are supportive and life-giving, so that our response to the pain and brokenness of the world will take shape in risking new ways of service to unmet needs.

Let us pray for the grace, the courage and the fortitude to live each moment with an intense awareness of our call today.

PRAISED BE THE INCARNATE WORD...FOREVER!



Sister Celeste Trahan, 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**



Editor

Sr. Deenan Hubbard, CCVI

Director of Communications

Linda Macdonald

**Production Assistant and
Spanish Translator**

Liana Fernández-Baca

Please send articles and photographs for inclusion in *The Word Among Us* to Linda Macdonald at Villa de Matel, 6510 Lawndale Street, Houston, Texas 77023 or by E-mail to lmacdonald@ccvi-vdm.org. Deadline for the Christmas Issue is October 1, 2007.

**Visit our website at
www.sistersofcharity.org.**

IN THIS ISSUE

4 Ruah Center

The spirituality center at Villa de Matel offers silence, beauty, healing and hope as described in this story by its Director, Sister Adeline O'Donoghue.

8 CatholicNunsToday.Org

Four Congregations of Women Religious have collaborated in the launching of a new initiative to enhance public awareness of the active, faith-filled lives of today's Sisters.



Page 8

10 The Three Boys

New information on Albert Campbell and recently shared photographs give new insight to the lives of the three boys who survived the Great 1900 Storm at St. Mary's Orphanage.



Page 18

16 La Familia de Dios

Dr. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz brings new insights and awareness to the central role of faith in the life of Latinas.

18 Golden Jubilee

Three Sisters celebrate their 50th anniversary as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

20 First Profession of Vows

Five Sisters, who recently made their First Profession of Vows, write about their spiritual journeys.



Page 4



Page 10



Page 26

26 The Ministry in Adult Literacy

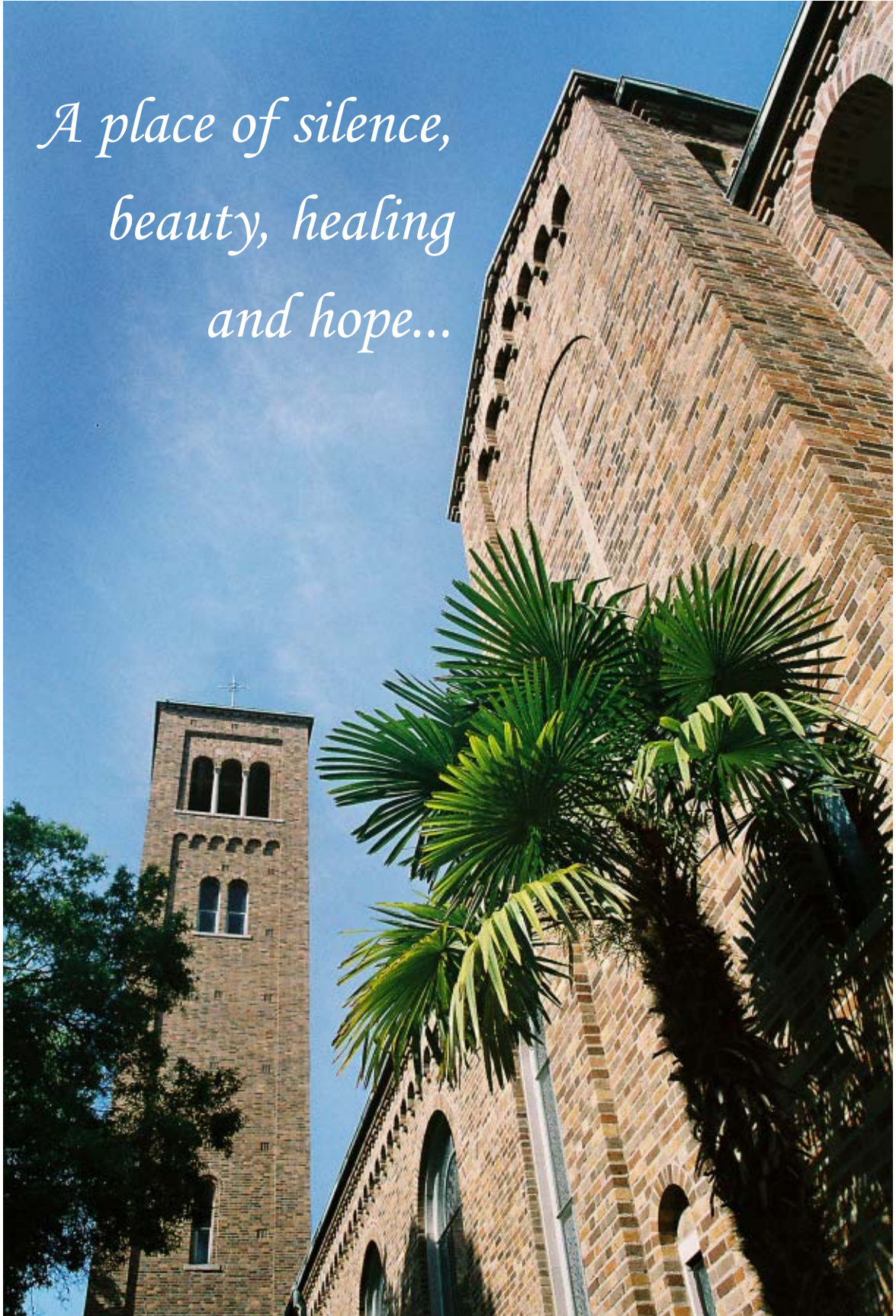
Sister Marie Bernarde Clancy responds to questions regarding the Congregation's literacy initiative in the Greater Houston Area.

32 Standing Columns

Briefs
Calendar

COVER: Our habits have changed, but not our mission. Sister Jane Zartman is among our Sisters featured on a new website designed to educate the public regarding Sisters today.

*A place of silence,
beauty, healing
and hope...*



Ruah Center

Villa de Matel

By Sister Adeline O'Donoghue

*R*uah Center, a ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, is a place of silence, beauty, healing and hope, and is open to all who are seeking God. Located in Houston at Villa de Matel, the Motherhouse of the Congregation, the Ruah Center welcomes individuals and groups seeking a few hours of prayer, a day of prayer, or a longer period of retreat.

Ruah is the Hebrew word for *breath of God*. It comes from the first chapter of Genesis which says, "God breathed over the chaos." I think Ruah is a wonderful name for our center, because in our own time it is important to remember that we have that breath hovering over the chaos of our world.

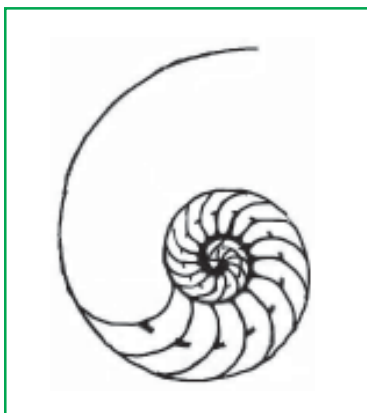
In Hebrew scripture *ruah elohim* is the creative wind of the Lord. We use circular shapes as symbols for Ruah. The circle was an ancient Christian symbol for God, community and the universe. Our circles are in motion, suggestive of T. S. Eliot's "still point in a turning world," the silent center being

God and the circular motion being our turning around and focusing on our creative center. In the East, the circle is a symbol of enlightenment.

Not even 20 years old, Ruah Center is a relatively new ministry for our Congregation. It is similar to other



Spiritual directors at Ruah Center pictured above, are: (seated) Sr. Adeline O'Donoghue, Ruah Center Director; (standing l to r) Kaye Johnson, Janet Troy, and Stephanie Harrison.



ministries of its kind in the Congregation, including the Ukurimu Centre in Kenya and in other centers where our Sisters do spiritual ministry.

Our center is unique in that we use part of Villa de Matel and are very privileged to be at the heart of the Congregation. We benefit from the beautiful grounds and the magnificent chapel built to the glory of God. Although only minutes away from downtown Houston, the Villa is its own quiet world. It is like an



oasis. The hustle and bustle of the city and busy freeways are just outside our gates, but on the grounds there is a quiet serenity.

I believe that on this property and in this chapel dwells the energy of our Sisters who have gone before us. Anyone who prayed in this chapel has left a gift behind that we may access. Many of the people who come here for retreats say that one of the places they experience a sense of God's

holiness and presence is the Villa cemetery. And I personally believe that. The power of the tears, the joys, and the challenges of those who went before us still energizes us today.

At the Ruah Center we offer a variety of retreats. Individual retreatants meet with a spiritual director. Groups who intend to give significant time to silent seeking and later sharing out of the silence are also welcome. We host many types of groups, including Bible study groups, parish staffs, prayer/meditation groups, women's and men's groups and others. Each member of a group will be expected to enter into solitude at intervals throughout their time with us. We are fortunate to have overnight facilities available for both individuals and groups.

Throughout the calendar year we offer longer retreats for religious and others who are able to take time off to do so. Six-day preached retreats feature a daily group conference. Eight-day directed retreats allow persons to visit daily with a spiritual director. We sometimes modify the length of these retreats, and offer optional prayer opportunities, such as art journaling, Tai Chi or yoga. Daily Eucharist is celebrated at all retreats. Massage therapy is usually available at our longer retreats.

For the past few years we have created one or two "mini-retreats" a year, usually beginning Thursday evening or Friday morning and extending through Sunday

afternoon. These are especially appreciated by people who cannot come for six or eight consecutive days because of work or family responsibilities.

Once or twice each month, from Friday evening to Saturday evening, we host a Centering Prayer Weekend. Times of centering as a group are interspersed with free time in solitude, short conferences with directors and optional Eucharist.

Occasionally we offer a seven or eight-day centering prayer retreat.

Several times each year, Ruah welcomes the public to the Villa Chapel for Taizé prayer services that we co-host with various musicians from the Houston area.

All of our retreats begin with an encouragement for participants to be aware that silence is God's language. If they listen and if they enter into the silence and allow themselves to become quiet, they can become aware that they, too, are living from the breath of God. The breath of God is part of what gives rise to our very lives and gives them meaning.

There are two others on staff with me: Janet Troy and Kaye Johnson. In addition Stephanie Harrison is a volunteer director. Directors meet with retreat participants mainly to listen. We listen to what they are bringing with them—every kind of struggle, question, experience, and challenge with which people must deal. This gives us opportunities to have our spirituality connect with a larger vision, because we can't personally experience everything ourselves.

Through the sharing we listen to the challenges of others, such as mothers who are struggling to raise children or fathers who are challenged in their jobs to deal with questionable practices. We listen to



Sister Rose Scanlan (standing) and Rachel Rodriguez (sitting on the left on the front row) conduct a short prayer session on the Villa grounds with students from St. Austin Literacy Center.

women who want to reach out to help others in need and are trying to find out what God is calling them to do. There are those who are seeking a deeper relationship with God, and others who may have been homeless or in some other type of crisis and are trying to get their lives back in order.

All of these people give us opportunities to minister, and often to people we do not meet directly. By helping one in his/her struggle, God touches others down the line. It is personal, however, for each one. Each person's life is important. I have noticed often that people who come here report that they leave with a greater sense of hope, with less sense of being overwhelmed by life and ready to take the next step.

A new and exciting development for Ruah is that over the past few years we have been building a relationship with the Hispanic communities of our neighborhood. The ways of meeting them has

been through the Literacy Center at St. Austin Center, located adjacent to the Villa on South Wayside, and through Immaculate Conception Parish on nearby Harrisburg Street. Sister Rose Scanlan, Rachel Rodriguez and Janet Mayorga have been working directly with students who come to St. Austin to study English. They have met with students who stay after classes for short prayer sessions. Some stay for listening sessions during which participants receive help with family or personal issues.

On May 18, 2007, we hosted the first half day of prayer for some of the female students. It was wonderful to see their joy and we know that Sister Rose, Rachel and Janet will be promoting more opportunities that Ruah can offer our lovely neighbors.

The spirituality of this Congregation is, as I see it, relational, because it is Christian. Any spirituality that is relational is that which is based in the Incarnation,

and we are Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. It is a spirituality that doesn't separate itself from the joys and the fears, the anxieties and the afflictions of the people around us. The struggles of others are our struggles. Our spirituality helps us to be present to life as it is without it overwhelming us. We are able to do this because we trust Christ whose Spirit is with us in our common human condition. Such a spirituality is one that relates us to persons who, like us, struggle to move through life, and in faith make some sense out of it. We trust there is a future beyond what we can imagine.

Our challenge is not so much to bring spirituality to anyone but to help people wake up to their own spiritual energy and goodness, their own mission in life. That is the genius of our founding call from Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis. He said, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands." He is saying that to us today, and we are saying to others, that God is already with you in your struggle, in your suffering; we acknowledge that, and we support them.

I believe that the Sisters in our Congregation are called to be relational people—those who relate to all others as having a deep calling in their own lives. We are not here to *bring* anything as much as to help people recognize that they *already are/have* a great gift, and that we can work with them, and they with us, in bringing about a better world.

Please pray for us and for all who come to Ruah.



By Sister Deenan Hubbard

CatholicNunsToday.org, a new website created to enhance the public's awareness and image of Women Religious, is now live on the Internet! The site, launched this summer, is hosted by the Intercongregational Imaging Committee (IIC), as the centerpiece of a campaign to help the public understand and recognize Women Religious today.

The fact is people do not know about us and most of the time they don't even recognize us. I could be sitting right next to someone in church or in the theater or even in my ministry and that person probably would not recognize me as a Sister. Admittedly, without the habit or even a veil, it is a bit of a challenge, but our commitment to serve God is not contingent upon our clothing.

The most common public perception of Women Religious is based upon the stereotypical Nun in a habit. We are often seen as something out of the movies, like *Sister Act* with Whoopie Goldberg. National and regional surveys have shown that people have a great deal of respect for Women Religious, but they do not know who we are.

Educating the public regarding current religious life was a huge undertaking. Nevertheless, a group of Congregations of Women Religious in Texas decided to take on the task. Representatives from

the Sisters of Divine Providence in San Antonio, Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament in Corpus Christi, the Dominican Sisters of Houston and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston, decided to work together to develop a communications plan which would address ways to educate the public. They formed the Intercongregational Imaging Committee and began building upon previous good initiatives, including RSBP (Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests) and RECAST (Religious Communities Alive in South Texas).

After many months discussing, researching and developing the plan, the IIC chose a website as its main initiative. The Internet is the tool many people, especially the young, use to find information. The committee intentionally chose not to focus on a particular age group, gender or religious affiliation. We are equally interested in reaching a senior male who happens to be Methodist or Jewish as we are in reaching a young Catholic female.

Sister Stories is an area on the site which describes the lives of Sisters from the four sponsoring Congregations. Representing our Congregation are Sisters Jane Zartman, Ana Julia Granados Ulloa, Rosanne Popp and Marisa Revert

Font. Through the individual stories, website visitors can get to know us as persons and a little of why we choose to be Sisters.

A very important part of the website is the *Frequently Asked Questions*. The IIC collected questions that we have each been asked or that we thought the public might ask and then we attempted to give candid, honest answers. We want to articulate an authentic image of religious life.

The site will not only provide information, but the *Contact Us* area of the site will draw Internet users to each of our own Congregational websites.

Early in the process of this initiative, the IIC recognized the need for professional assistance. Linda Macdonald, our Congregation's Director of Communications, was invited to attend the meetings. Linda proved to be an invaluable resource in helping us to develop and implement the plan. We then contracted with Special Audience Marketing, a full-service communications agency, to make the website a reality.

Now that the site is up, our next task is to promote it. We are producing postcards and posters that will be mailed to parishes, schools, Dioceses, youth ministers, young adult ministers, vocation office, etc. We have developed a display board and will exhibit the website at the National Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Kansas City in August. The news media in each of our respective areas have heard about the site, and we are getting excellent news coverage.

Religious life is a relevant and significant way of living out our Baptism. Our habits have changed, but not our mission!



© copyright 2007 Catholic Nuns Today. All rights reserved.

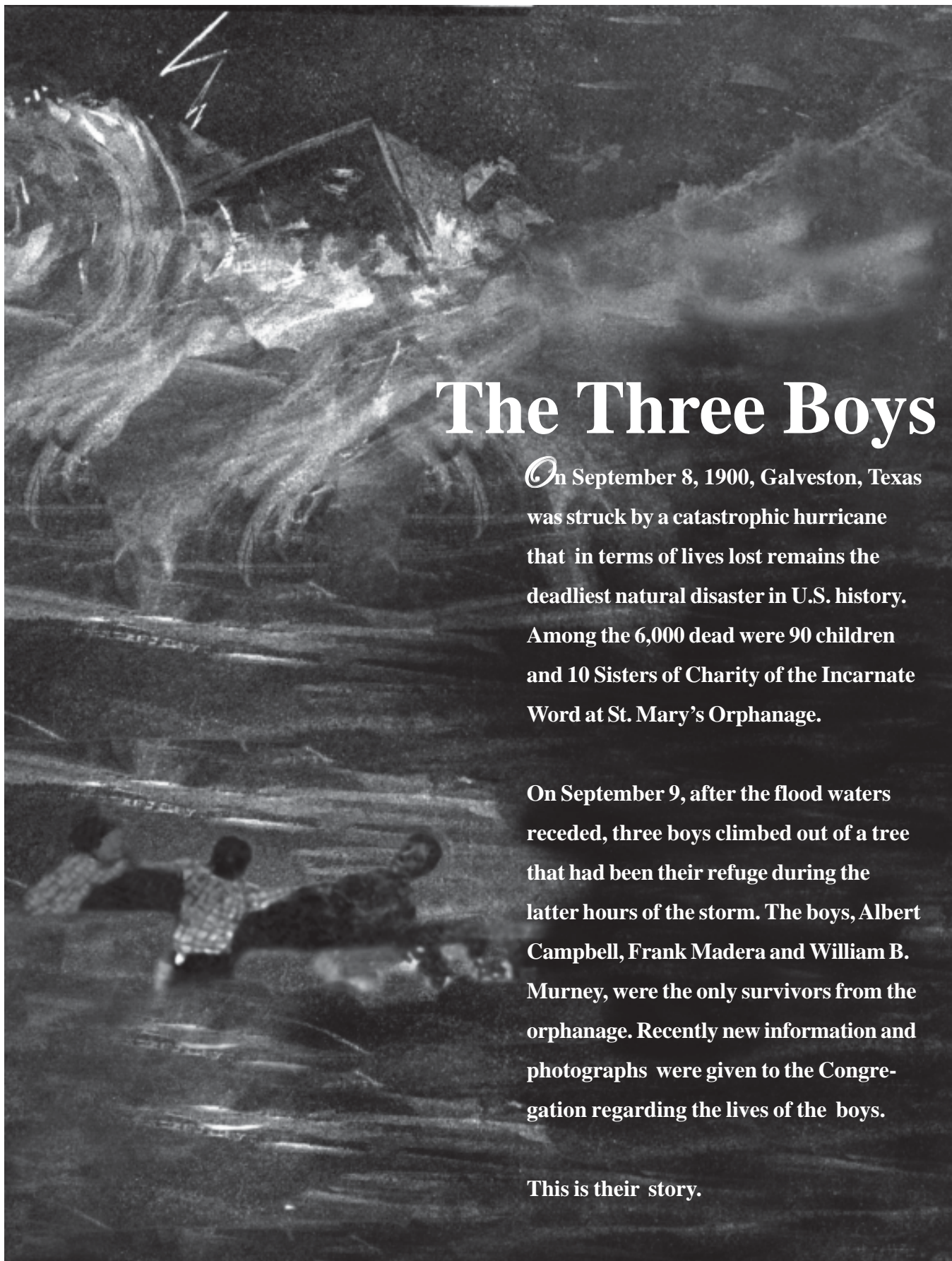


Intercongregational Imaging Committee

Sister Anne Garcia, MCDP
 Sister Charlene Wedelich, CDP
 Sister Deenan Hubbard, CCVI
 Sister Elsa Garcia CDP
 Sister Irma Gonzalez, IWBS
 Sister JoAnn Niehaus, O.P.
 Linda Macdonald
 Sister Rosa Ortiz, IWBS
 Sister Rosalie Karstedt, CDP
 Sister Rose Kruppa, CDP



In the photograph to the far left, Sister Jane Zartman, who enjoys walking, shares her story on the new website. Pictured above are examples of the various website pages.



The Three Boys

On September 8, 1900, Galveston, Texas was struck by a catastrophic hurricane that in terms of lives lost remains the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Among the 6,000 dead were 90 children and 10 Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word at St. Mary's Orphanage.

On September 9, after the flood waters receded, three boys climbed out of a tree that had been their refuge during the latter hours of the storm. The boys, Albert Campbell, Frank Madera and William B. Murney, were the only survivors from the orphanage. Recently new information and photographs were given to the Congregation regarding the lives of the boys.

This is their story.

Albert Campbell



Albert was born on May 19, 1887, in Houston. His mother died in New Orleans in 1895 and his father, a Civil War Union veteran, died in 1898. Of the eleven known children born to William Campbell, also known as William Roust, and Mary Ann Brown, only four lived to adulthood.

After Albert's parents died, he and his younger sister Magdalena, known as Maggie, lived with their older, married sister, Mary Ann Mattis. Mary Ann's husband George worked as a draftsman for the Santa Fe Railroad. In 1900, George was transferred to Topeka, Kansas. Only months prior to the storm, Mary Ann placed Albert, who was 13, and Maggie in St. Mary's Orphanage while she and her husband moved and settled in their new home. It was to be a temporary placement during the move. Edith, another sister who was about five years older than Albert, went with the Mattis family to help with the relocation as Mary Ann was expecting a child and needed the help.

The Great 1900 Storm began the morning of September 8 with huge waves crashing on the south shore of Galveston Island. The orphanage was three miles west of the city and was located directly on the beachfront.

As the storm intensified during the day, Albert and the other older boys, were empowered to help care for younger children. The boys were moved into the newer and stronger girls' dormitory and Albert wanted to help his little sister. Albert remembered climbing on the roof of the dormitory with other girls and boys. He also remembered seeing one of the men at the orphanage with a baby on his back.

Eventually the dormitory collapsed and Albert was not able to hold on to Maggie who drowned as the dormitory sank into the flood waters.

Albert managed to escape from the dormitory and made his way to a piece of floating timber and then to a

tree. He was battered by debris and was struck violently in the head. Two other boys from the orphanage joined him in the same tree. Looking into the water he thought he saw the Sisters tucking the little children into their beds. The sight was so inviting that he tried to get out of the tree and join the Sisters. William Murney stopped him from leaving the tree and eventually used ropes that were already in the tree to tie him to keep him safe.

After the storm, Albert and the boys walked to Fort Crockett where soldiers cut down uniforms for them to wear. The storm had stripped the boys of their clothes and all Albert had was a tattered and torn undershirt.

The three continued their journey into town. At St. Mary's Infirmary, also operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Albert received medical care. His mind was blank and he could only say, "Save Maggie." Five days after the storm, Albert was placed on one of the first refugee trains to leave Galveston for Houston. On the train he was seen by the mother of Mrs. H.H. Kuhlmann, a friend of his older sister Mary Ann. The mother described Albert's body as "one mass of cuts." Learning that Albert was alive from her



Albert Campbell (to the far right) with his older sister's family, from left to right back row, George Mattis, his sister Edith, his sister Mary Ann Mattis holding baby Sarah, and in front Rose and Eddie.

mother, Mrs. Kuhlmann wired his sister in Topeka and then went to St. Joseph Hospital in Houston where Albert had been taken. She asked the Sisters there to let her take Albert with her until his sister could come from Topeka to take him home with her.

At first the Sisters were reluctant to release Albert to Mrs. Kuhlmann as the Bishop had said that he wanted all three of the boys to be sent to an orphanage in Dallas. However, they let Mrs. Kuhlmann see Albert and once they saw how he ran to her and begged her to take him, the Sisters agreed that Albert should go with her and eventually go home with his sister. His request to go with the woman was the first words Albert had spoken besides “Save Maggie.”

As soon as the trains were running again into Houston from Topeka, Albert’s sister came for him. Carrying her three-month-old baby, she rode all the way in a baggage car filled with supplies.

It was a joyful reunion for Albert and Mary Ann, although Albert was severely injured. Mary Ann also looked for Maggie, but finally accepted that she had died. According to his sister in a letter, four doctors used a method known as trephination to cut a hole in Albert’s skull to relieve intracranial pressure. A plate was placed in his head to cover the opening.

Albert went with his sister to Topeka. He was there in 1903 for another flood which once again threatened his life and the lives of those he loved.

In 1907, Albert’s sister Edith married a man in Topeka. They had two children. She died tragically in a mountain cabin fire in 1932.

Around 1911 the Santa Fe Railroad transferred George Mattis again. This time he was sent to Los



Albert and Pearlene Campbell circa 1918

Angeles. The Mattis family settled in Anaheim not far from where Disneyland now stands. Mary Ann and George raised four sons and four daughters.

Albert worked at a variety of jobs and called himself a “jack of all trades.” He was a pipe fitter for Rock Island Railroad for 10 years and with Santa Fe Railroad for five years. In the 1930s, he was the assistant building engineer at a 10-story office building in Los Angeles.

Albert married a woman named Pearlene and they had one daughter, Sarah Magdalena. Her family called her “Rosara.” Sarah did not marry. According to a cousin, she was a brilliant scientist who graduated from USC. Sarah died leaving no descendents.

Family members recall that Albert was a “jolly man” with a “wonderful laugh.”

Through a newspaper article in the Houston Post in 1937, he made contact with Frank Madera and the two met in Houston for a reunion.

Albert Campbell died on February 9, 1955 and is buried with the family of his sister, Mary Ann Mattis, in Holy Sepulcher Cemetery, Orange, California.



Magdalena “Maggie” Campbell, circa 1892, who died in the Great 1900 Storm. Albert’s daughter Sarah Magdalena “Rosara” Campbell circa 1940.

Frank (Bulnavic) Madera

Born in Austria, Frank came to America in 1898 with his mother and sister Frances when he was 10 years old. In Galveston, the three lived with the Bulnavic family. His mother died two months after their arrival, and the Bulnavics placed Frank and Frances in St. Mary's Orphanage.

Frank was 12 years old at the time of the storm. His sister who was older had already left the orphanage and was living in Houston.

He recalled in an interview in 1937 in the Houston Post that it was about 10 a.m. on September 8, when they first began to realize the seriousness of the storm. He said that by late afternoon "the waves began to hit the shore below us with such force that it almost broke our eardrums and gradually washed out the foundations of the dormitory as if the ground were flour."

He added, "I must say there was never a braver group of women than the Sisters. They comforted the children as best they could."

According to Frank, around 7 p.m. the dormitory began to float, raised by the flood waters. Then suddenly one wall caved in. The floor sank as a great wave hit.

"The Sisters and children didn't have a chance," Frank recalled. The dormitory collapsed trapping them and "taking them down to the bottom of the gulf."

Frank grabbed a large piece of timber and held on tightly as the waves tossed him up and down in the water. In a few minutes another boy, Albert Campbell grabbed the timber and then William Murney joined them on the same piece of wood. Frank was hit in the head by a piece of weatherboarding and was knocked unconscious until the salt water revived him.

The three boys found a tree with branches above the water line and climbed in it. It was at that point that Frank recalled seeing things in a "sort of semi-delirium." He said he could see the Sisters putting the children to bed in the orphanage. The strange thing was that Albert Campbell saw the same vision.

After the storm ended, Frank and the other boys climbed out of the tree and walked to Fort Crockett where they were given clothes. All three were cut and battered. Traveling past the most horrid sights of death and destruction, the three walked to town. It wasn't

until two days after the storm that Frank received medical treatment. He recalled, "They found my skull was fractured. I was cared for at St. Mary's Cathedral as there was no room in the hospital. We were taken to Pearson's Clothing Store and given proper clothing. After two weeks, I was brought to St. Joseph Hospital in Houston and was kept there for six or seven months before I got well enough to take care of myself."

Frank became a US citizen before World War I and served in the U.S. Army Aviation Corps. He was first with the 19th Construction Battalion and later the Signal Corps. He was stationed in England for more than five months.

Frank married a woman named Edna, and they had one daughter, Julia. His daughter vividly remembered as a child watching her father "pace like a caged animal whenever there was a storm."

Frank worked for 34 years at the Hughes Tool Company in Houston. In 1937 he was interviewed by the Houston Post regarding his experiences in the storm. That story brought about a renewed connection with Albert Campbell.

Frank died in 1953 at his home in Houston and was buried at Forest Park Cemetery near Villa de Matel in Houston.



Frank Madera in World War I uniform

William B. Murney



Born in Galveston, Texas on March 31, 1887, William Bernard Murney was the third child of Joseph and Kate Murphy Murney. He had two older sisters, Elizabeth and Josephine, and one younger brother, Joseph. William's father immigrated from Ireland to Liverpool, England, presumably to escape persecution of Catholics in Northern Ireland. The family then moved to the U.S.A. His mother was born in New Orleans in 1856 and her parents were also from Ireland.

Tragedy struck the life of William when he was 7 years of age. He and his brother were suddenly orphaned as the result of the death of their parents. Kate Murney died of "consumption," and the day following her funeral, William's father died of a heart attack. At that time, Elizabeth and Josephine were teenagers and were not placed in the orphanage. Josephine was cared for by the Pearson family, and Elizabeth lived with the Bodecker family.

William, at age 7, and his brother Joseph, age 2, were placed in St. Mary's Orphanage around 1894. A bright and responsible boy, William was later given the privilege of driving the wagon from the orphanage to Galveston for supplies with one of the Sisters.

At the time of the storm, William was 13 and Joseph was 8. William remembered that the storm was raging in the evening and that the Sisters brought the boys into the girls' dormitory because it was newer and stronger than the boys' dormitory. When the water

*The William B. Murney Family:
(seated) William Murney, his wife
Genevieve who is holding their
youngest son Robert, (back) William, Jr.,
Joseph and Richard.*

began to enter the orphanage, the Sisters had the children go to the second floor. He recalled the Sisters obtaining clotheslines and tying the younger children to the Sisters' own bodies in hopes of saving them. His last recollection, according to his sons, was that he was holding onto his brother Joseph when the roof collapsed and he was struck by a large timber.

William recalled waking up in a tree with two other boys.

After the storm, William went to St. Mary's Infirmary where he was cared for by the Sisters. He had a wound to the head and a deep cut on his hand.

After his wounds healed, the Sisters allowed him to live in one of the rooms in the basement of the hospital. For the next three years, he worked as an orderly in the hospital and was encouraged by a number of physicians to go to medical school.



At age 16, William misrepresented his age and obtained a position as an apprentice machinist on a local railroad. He then became what was known as a "boomer mechanic." This was the era of the railroad's greatest growth and



machinists could obtain jobs in any city in the country. William traveled throughout Texas working for various railroads and eventually migrated to Springfield, Missouri around 1912.

Shortly after arriving in Springfield, William met Genevieve Frances Glynn, a school teacher who was visiting from St. Louis. They married in Genevieve's home church, St. Alphonsus Ligouri Church in St. Louis. The two settled in Springfield, where they resided most of their lives.

William and his wife raised four successful sons. William Murney, Jr. is a retired electrical engineer who currently resides in Tucson, Arizona. He and his wife raised a family of five daughters and one son.

The second child, Joseph A. Murney, M.D., was a thoracic surgeon who practiced in Washington, Missouri. He and his wife had two daughters. Joseph, named for his uncle who was killed in the 1900 Storm, died in 1987.

Richard Glynn Murney, Ph.D., was a clinical psychologist in private practice in St. Louis. He and his wife had five children. Richard, now deceased, attended the dedication of a Texas Historical Marker denoting the location of the former St. Mary's Orphanage in Galveston in 1994.

Robert J. Murney, Ph.D., was a clinical psychologist in private practice in Springfield. He married and had five children. After his wife died, Robert remarried and between the two of them they had nine children: five of Robert's children by his first marriage and four step-children from Donna, his second wife.

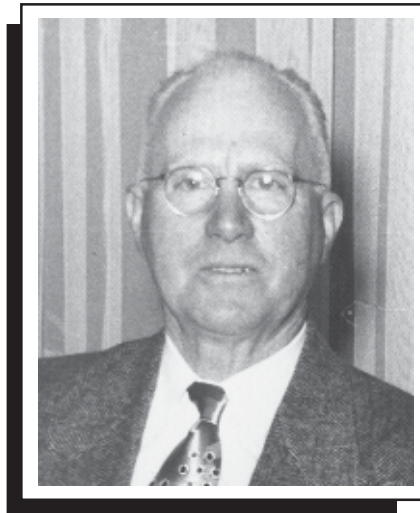
William's wife Genevieve died in 1961. In 1963, William went to live with his son Robert and resided with his family until his death in 1971. At the time of William Murney's death, he still had the scar on his hand from the 1900 Storm.

His son Robert remembered him as "a wonderful gentleman who was strong, highly moral, shy, loving, and modest."

Robert, who is now deceased, also attended the dedication of the Texas Historical Marker and the Centennial Commemoration of the 1900 Storm in Galveston. At the dedication of the marker, he said of his father, "Despite being deprived of his parents at an



early age and despite undergoing unbelievable trauma at the age of 13, William B. Murney responded to the challenges of life in what I consider to be an amazing manner. He had only a sixth grade education, yet he



developed his skills as a machinist and was in management with the Frisco Railroad when he retired at the age of 70 in 1957. All of his sons obtained college degrees and three of them went on to complete their doctorates. We were able to do

the things we did as the result of having parents who provided a warm and protective home life in which the most important values in life were inculcated."

Pictured at top of page: William Murney and wife Genevieve relax in front of their home in Springfield. Above: William B. Murney in later life.

La Familia de Dios y mi Hermano Jesucristo

By Pat Kerwin

“⁷The faith and religious understandings of Latinas are not unique, but there is a particularity—a specific way in which they express and live this important dimension of their lives.” And so began an exploration into the rich and multifaceted expression of the religiosity of Latinas through the wisdom and study of Dr. Ada María Isasi-Díaz. Dr. Isasi-Díaz, a native of Cuba, is currently professor of Ethics and Theology at Drew University. She has focused her study and writing on *mujerista* theology drawing on the prophetic voices of Hispanic women, the poor and the marginalized. Her presentation in the Spirit and Life Conference series brought new insights and awareness to the central role of faith in the life of Latinas.

Every person is born into a cultural milieu which shapes one’s customs, practices, ideas, world-view and cosmology. While traditional cultures changed slowly, culture today changes at a rapid pace reflecting our ever evolving reality in terms of economics, politics and social circumstances. This constant change necessarily causes some discontinuity with the past, but there are repeated practices of culture that are deeply rooted traditions essential to the way one views the world and deals with reality. A number of such elements in the culture of faith have been passed from generation to generation among Latinas and characterize their religious practice today.

Mujerista theology reflects a theology born of a people who have suffered marginalization and oppression. From their experience of the *conquistadores* who conquered with the cross in the

name of the church through the *colonizadores* who blended politics and religious practice, indigenous persons were forced to incorporate their faith practices into new ways, or at least pretend to do so, in order to survive. This cultural experience continues to be reflected in faith expressions today; as Dr. Isasi-Díaz noted, “We fashion religion according to how we need it—I am Catholic ‘a mi manera’ —” structuring beliefs about God in answer to one’s basic needs. Several elements are characteristic of the lived faith experience of Latinas:

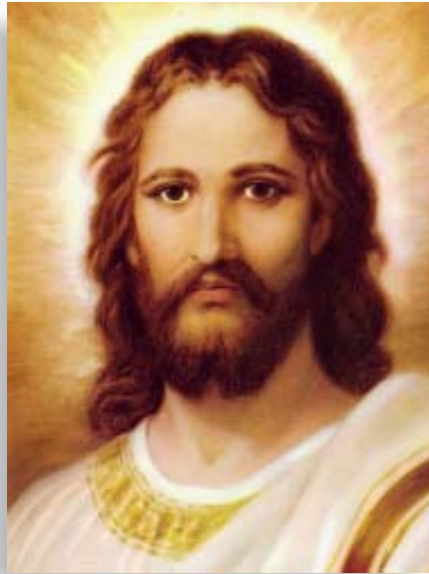
- o Latinas’ Catholicity and religious experience is practice-centered, not creed-centered, and is rich in ritual.

- o Community is essential to their understanding of church; religious practices are always public and communal and the term ‘church’ expresses the gathered community as truly as it expresses the place where they gather.

- o Catholicity is part of the identity of being Latina, but the home is often the center of devotion and prayer while official ecclesial concerns are more peripheral to their practice. With *madres* and *tías* creating home altars and leading novenas and family devotions, the home church is not dependent on official church leaders to gather them in prayer.

- o The Divine is always near and familiar to the Latina—not totally “Other.” In fact, the intimacy with the Divine is so prevalent that they often use nicknames for God...terms of endearment and relationship that clearly reflect the human participation in the divine life.

- o While being Catholic is part of the Latinas’ identity, they do not find it unusual to participate in a number of churches. Rather than seeing divisions in a diversity of experiences, they tend to see the richness of adding a variety of ‘layers’ of religious expressions to their lives.



The Christology of Latinas likewise has been fashioned by the experience of being a marginalized people. God is not looked to as one who solves problems, but rather, as one who is a faithful companion on life’s journey—one who embraces them into his own family. They hunger for a deep personal relationship with their brother, *Jesucristo*, who sustains them in their daily struggles. It is only reasonable that the theology of liberation and freedom would be born in such a cultural expression of faith.

Steeped in a deep sense of family, Latinas do not face the world alone. As members of the family of God, Jesus becomes the intimate expression of all one clings to and trusts—a mother, a brother,

sister, aunt. Christian discipleship flows from this familial relationship; all are called to do the work of salvation as members of the household of God. Faith in action is fundamental in the Latina culture where doing precedes believing—ethics preceding faith. To come closer to God, one must come closer to the *familia de Dios* where one’s intimacy with the divine is made visible in one’s care for others. From these deep relationships, solidarity is born among the community members, *Jesús mío* lives and works in each member because he lives and works in the whole community helping and sustaining the poor and oppressed. Latinas understand that none can be liberated unless all are liberated.

The right ordering of relationships expresses the biblical sense of justice where the love of neighbor is key to the reign of God.

In a world that hungers for communion among its human inhabitants and a deep connection to the divine, we stand to be enriched by the faith expressions of our Latina sisters and Latino brothers. The history of cultures has demonstrated how dominant groups suffer when they do not embrace differences and the richness of diversity. The Latina experience invites us to balance the Christianity of western culture with its appeal to reason and intellect with a warm abrazo for the *familia de Dios* where we are one with the God of all ages, with the angels, and with all the saints.

Golden Jubilee



Pictured from left to right in top photograph are Golden Jubilarians Sisters Sheila Ann O'Beirne, Rosalita Weber and Margaret Bulmer.

Three Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, celebrated their Golden Jubilee on Saturday, May 26, 2007, at Villa de Matel. Celebrating 50 years of Religious Profession are Sisters Rosalita Weber, Sheila Ann O'Beirne and Margaret Bulmer. Family members, friends and Sisters attended a special ceremony at the Villa Chapel during which time the Jubilarians

reaffirmed their vows to God. A Mass honoring the Jubilarians was celebrated with The Most Rev. Daniel N. DiNardo, Archbishop of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, serving as the main celebrant. He also delivered the Homily. Following the Mass, guests joined the Jubilarians at a celebration dinner at the Dubuis Conference Center.





Five Sisters Make First Profession Of Vows

Each writes about her own personal spiritual journey to become a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

**Praised be
the Incarnate Word.**

Forever!

GOD CALLS US LONG BEFORE WE REALIZE

By Sr. Angeline Obonyo Mecha

I was born in a Catholic family of seven children in Kenya. My mother was very devoted to our Blessed Virgin Mary and I often heard her praying the rosary. Mary was her refuge. My mother taught me many Marian songs. Margaret, my sister, is also a mentor in my spiritual journey. She encouraged me to be involved in church activities and introduced me to the Youth and Charismatic groups.

When I recall the beginning of my call, I remember the words that were said to me during my cousin's Profession. I met a Sister who said, "What is your name?" I said, "Angeline." She said, "Mine is Angeline, too, and I would like you to be a Sister." Whether she was serious, only God knows. I was 8 years old and her words had little impact on me. However, I was sure of one thing, that there were many people rejoicing and celebrating at the Profession.

During primary school, I was taught by Sister Rose Anton a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND). I liked her very much because she was nice and never punished us when we made a mistake. She also visited us at home.

Fortunately, after my primary education, I attended an SSND secondary school. I enjoyed being taught by them. They were very kind. I admired their lifestyle and began to think about joining their Order in the future. God knew what He had in mind for me.

I stayed in the SSND School for almost two years and then we moved to a town school. After



being in the town school for three years, I don't remember seeing a Sister. I enjoyed living in town and I considered raising my

family there some day. After finishing school, God was very good to me and blessed me with a well paying job. This strengthened my love for God and I became more devoted to Him. I prayed to Him for enlightenment. Whenever I had to make a decision in my life, I always prayed to God.

As my relationship with God deepened, I was reminded of my desire as a young girl to become a Religious. I was shocked by God's reminder, but I acted like I didn't

***I am privileged
to be one called
to answer
our founder's
words.***

feel anything within me. God is patient and kept calling me gently. I kept resisting thinking that God would change His mind, but I was wrong. It was a tug of war. I didn't have any reason for resisting, but my current situation wouldn't allow me to say yes at that time.

Days turned into months and months turned to years, but I was looking for ways to justify myself. I prayed to God to give me more time. God never refused my plea.

Later, I realized that I needed to talk to others about what was going on in my life. I told my family. They knew I was feeling this way, and they encouraged me as did others.

I was introduced to Sister Francesca Kearns, the Vocation Director for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. Her welcome touched my heart, and I saw a true Christian. She was a humble and loving Sister. I remember that this was what I admired in the SSND's. Sister Francesca invited me to attend a seminar called "Vocation Discernment and Behavior Change." I enjoyed the topics that were presented at the seminar. I met many young people that had the same desire. We exchanged ideas and became friends. The environment was prayerful. This was something that I really liked.

In 2002, I attended a secretarial college for one and a half years and received a certificate. Later, I took a catechetical course for six months.

In 2004, I became a Postulant with the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. I devoted myself to God who was calling me. During this year, I came to know Him better and grew in accepting the diversity of the group. I learned

more about prayer and continued to deepen my relationship with God.

The following year I entered the Novitiate, where I continued to deepen my relationship with God through days of prayer. I also grew mentally, socially and physically. I also learned more about Religious Life, the Vows and the Congregation's Constitutions. I tried to balance my ministry with prayer life and community with the help of God.

On December 9th, I consecrated myself to God through the First Profession of Vows in the Congregation. I was very excited by the beautiful celebration, which was incorporated into the Silver Jubilee celebration of the presence of the Sisters in Kenya. During the Profession, I was touched by words spoken by Sister Lillian Anne Healy, Congregational Leader, as she put the emblem of the Congregation, around my neck. Sr. Lillian Anne said: "Sr. Angeline, receive this emblem of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, which represents the suffering and death of the Word made Flesh. Wear Jesus' name upon your heart that He may dwell there and become your only love."

Today I enjoy living in the Baraka Community and working at Bishop Ndingi Primary School. I am very grateful to all the Sisters especially those who worked in Kenya.

I am privileged to be one called to answer our founder's words: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands."

MY FAITH JOURNEY

Sr. Edith Bulubisi Wasike

When I reflect on my faith journey, it seems like a dream. Born in Kenya in a Protestant family, becoming a Catholic Woman Religious was not one of my goals in life.

In my youth, there were times that I would sneak into the Catholic Church to see what was happening there. At these moments I admired everything that I saw.

During my first days in school, I was glad to attend Mass everyday. This gave me the courage to share my heart's desire with an Ursuline Sister. I had already registered to become a Catholic and was encouraged to take time with my feelings before joining the Catechism class.

After a few months, I joined the Catechism class and started learning about the Catholic faith. It was through these classes that I started to understand my attraction to the Church. I informed my parents through letters, but when I went home for the holidays my father was not happy. To him it didn't make any sense. This didn't stop me from praying for my goal to become a reality.

I continued with the classes and joined the Young Christian Society. In the last year of my studies, the time came for me to be presented in the Church for Baptism. But unfortunately, the priest discovered that my home parish was an outstation (local church) of his parish. He decided to send me back to my parish with a letter to finish my classes and be baptized at the local church. This was one of the hardest moments in my life as I knew that



my parents were against my decision.

I didn't know what to do, but I gained courage and shared my

feelings with my parents. My father was silent for one month. Finally, he asked my mother to take me to the parish priest. During this time of waiting, I was praying for God's will to be done. My parish priest accepted me in the Catechism class for four months. I was baptized and received First Communion on May 20, 2000. This was a very special day in my life. I was filled with joy and peace that I had never experienced in my life. This experience affirmed for me the words of Jesus: "With God everything is possible."

After becoming a Catholic, I felt like there was still an empty space in my life that had not been filled. This was my desire to become a Religious. With several addresses from *Seed Magazine*, I wrote to different Congregations. After a week I received a reply from Sister Francesca Kearns, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, who invited me for a day of prayer.

On my first meeting with her, she advised me to go to college. While attending college, I continued to attend monthly Vocation Seekers meetings and other seminars. I was unclear about my call. Was it to get married or to be a religious? This called me to do some serious

discernment on what I really wanted in life, and again God answered my prayer. I decided to become a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

In January 2004, I became a Postulant. For me this was a time of many questions. It was sometimes confusing, but it helped me to get a feeling for the Religious Life. During the Postulancy, I learned how to pray and reflect on my life.

*I was unclear
about my call.
Was it to get
married
or to be a religious?*

During my Novitiate, I learned different ways of approaching the challenges of life. The spiritual year was special and a blessing for me. I had enough time for prayer, work and recreation. It was a year of growth in my understanding of Religious Life, prayer and self-knowledge. I learned to invite Jesus to be with me in my difficult moments and trust in Him as my guide and seek His will in all I do.

The second year of my Novitiate was different. There were many activities, but I tried to balance my life. It helped me to experience the ministry and gave me a picture of the future of a Religious.

When it came to preparing for my retreat prior to profession, I was fearful. On the first day of my retreat, I shared my feelings with my spiritual director. He challenged me by saying, "Do you have the courage to believe the promise that

Christ will move the rock that entombs us and set us free? He's done it before, He rose."

I also reflected on the scriptures from Psalm 56:4 and Isaiah 12:2; 41:10. They called me from fear to trust. It opened my heart to accept God's will and to serve God as a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, a Gospel of Love.

I learned that I must always bear in mind that it will never be easy, but it is only by God's grace that I will accept the hard moments with faith and recognize God in them. I felt encouraged more when I reflected on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah which says, "Fear not for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name. You are mine." God gives no guarantee that trouble will not strike me. What He does guarantee is that He will be with me as a tower of strength in my troubles.

Saying, "Yes," at my First Profession of Vows on December 9, 2006 was a much deeper commitment than my Baptism. I have learned that where "Yes" exists no matter how simple it is, there is also a possibility of "No." I am aware of my need for God's help in continuing to live my "Yes." Bishop Dubuis' call states, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the multitude of the sick and the infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands." I have experienced this call through the students and parents at school and at home. I get strength in helping them in their studies and problems.

I give thanks to God for guiding my journey this far, to the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, to my family and my friends for their support, guidance and prayers. God bless you all.

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

Sr. Hellen Chepkurui Koskei

Born in Kenya, I am the third child in a family of six girls. My Dad is a Protestant and my Mum is a Catholic. Because of my father's job, he wasn't always home. We were baptized as infants and raised in the Catholic faith.

I wanted to enter Religious Life when I was a small girl. At this time, we lived near a home for the disabled called St. Francis Home. The home was operated by the Little Sisters of Saint Francis. What attracted me to these Sisters was their love for the poor and crippled children. They treated them as if they were their own children. As I looked at them, I began to desire the same life for myself.

Several times the Sisters found me playing with these children. One Sister told me, "You will become one of us one day." I never uttered a word, but instead I smiled.

The desire to become a Religious continued throughout primary school, but I didn't reveal it to anyone. One day, two Sisters came to visit us in our church. As I listened to them, I was impressed and said to myself; "I would like to become one of them." That night I couldn't sleep because I was thinking about all they had shared.

When I was in secondary school, some of my friends talked to me about the work of the Religious in their parishes. Seeing that I was interested, they gave me materials on various Congregations. I read them and choose different Orders that attracted my attention.

I was touched with the Charism of the Sisters of Charity of the

Incarnate Word and their foundational call: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands." I felt that this Congregation was where the Lord was calling me to be. These words reminded me when I was a small child and my Aunt said, "If I could become young again, I would become a Religious and serve the people and especially the sick." I looked at her without answering, but inside I had the same thought.

I wrote a letter to the Vocation Director. In a few days, I received a reply from Sister Francesca Kearns. When I had the courage, I shared this with my parents. My Dad, being a Protestant, was against the idea. In my culture, women are voiceless, so my Mum could not say anything. For almost two years, I didn't say anything else about my desire to enter Religious Life.

I prayed for my Dad, and my prayers were answered. One day my Mum told me that my Dad was now open to my desire to enter Religious Life. I was overwhelmed with joy, which was beyond explanation.

I attended my first Vocation Seekers meeting. I didn't know anyone, except Sister Francesca Kearns, and she called me by name



saying, "Welcome Hellen. I have been longing for you to come." I was pleasantly surprised and happy for the warm welcome she gave me.

I decided this Congregation was right for me.

I said, "Yes," on December 9, 2006, as I made my First Profession of Vows. This "yes" entails accepting the will of God. It is a "yes" that calls me to surrender everything in my life to my Creator. It means being ready and willing to carry my cross diligently.

Three years of formation have been of great help to me. This time has prepared me to live the Religious life as a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word. It has taught me that each one of us must climb her own personal mountain and struggle for a destiny that is hers alone. I am very happy and grateful for the Sisters who have journeyed with me during these past three years. All of this calls me to put my trust in God since He knows every fiber of my being, and He is always ready to direct me in every situation of my life.

I thank all who have helped me to be who I am today, especially the Sisters. Let us continue to pray for each other.

*I decided
this Congregation
was right for me.*

LISTENING FOR GOD'S CALL

By Sr. Maria Hernandez Choc

I am from the village of Lancetillo, Municipality of Usphantán, Department of Santa Cruz de Quiché, Guatemala. The daughter of Demecio Hernández Chiquín, (deceased) and Albina Choc Coc, I am the seventh of eight children.

Sister Santiaga Mejia Vasquez and the former Sister Deisis were the first Sisters I met from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. In 1995, they were visiting our community to educate the people about Family Planning. At that time, I was helping a group of women to learn how to plant a vegetable garden.

I was looking for a Congregation where I could register as a student and see if I had a vocation. I went to one congregation, but it did not appeal to me. When I came to visit the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, I felt attracted to them.

The following year, I met Sister Vicenta Miranda, who took a group of girls, including me, to Esquipulas to study. I studied for seven years until I graduated as a Primary School teacher in 2002. During that time I lived in community with the other students and helped at "El Hogar de mi Hermano," a home for the abandoned sponsored by the Sisters.

I liked the work that the Sisters did with the poor, the elderly, children, sick and with families. I started the formation process and become an Affiliate. I prayed to the Incarnate Word and martyrs and asked others to pray for me so that I could discover my vocation and

know what my response to God should be.

While an Affiliate, I learned about the charism of the Congregation. I also got to know the Sisters. This helped me to know myself better. I started studying theology at a university which helped me to learn more about the Bible, the Church and Jesus.

In 2005, I entered the Novitiate. During this time, I got to know Jesus and the Congregation on a deeper level. While working at COAR (Comunidad de Oscar A. Romero) in El Salvador, I cared for the orphan children at that facility and learned about the mission of the Sisters. This is where I could feel, see and touch the face of Jesus in the children and the people that worked with them. The community



experience gave me the opportunity to know the Sisters and to see how they gave themselves in love to the children and the people with whom they shared their lives.

When I returned to the Novitiate, I helped in a public school, where I experienced another reality. I saw that there were children who were abandoned and abused by their parents.

During that time, I was discerning God's call and saw how God acted in my life. All these experiences helped me to make the decision to take another step in my vocation.

On January 25, 2007, I made First Profession of Vows. This was another stage in my formation that will give me the opportunity to experience a pastoral apostolate, to share with the people, to walk in faith with them in their lives, and to live with the Sisters in the Maria y Jose Community, in Santa Cruz del Quiché. Today, I am Annually Professed and very happy in this new experience.

The community experience gave me the opportunity to know the Sisters and to see how they gave themselves in love to the children and the people that worked with them.

GOD OF SURPRISES

By Sr. Monicah Mugure
Ng'ang'a

Everything in life has its beginning in God. I was born in Kenya and am the youngest of nine children. My family has strong roots in the Catholic faith. The gift of faith came to me through my parents, but especially from my mother with whom I spent most of my time as a young child. Her love for us, her prayerfulness in times of distress and difficulties and her devotion to Our Mother Mary planted in me the seed of love and appreciation for my Catholic faith.

When I was growing up, there was a group of Dimesse Sisters working in my parish. They were very kind and friendly, especially to the young children. What touched me most as a child was the way they were dressed. They had a white uniform that covered them from head to toe. So when they were together, they looked like a group of angels! I started saying to myself, "When I grow up, I would like to be a Sister."

As time went by, my desire to become a Religious started to fade away. By the time I was in high school, my focus shifted to married life.

After high school, I joined a college that was sponsored by the Consolata Missionaries.

This is where my desire was rekindled in a fuller and more mature way. I met with young people who were searching for their vocation and I joined the club. After one year, I felt that I was called to give my life to God as a Religious Sister.

One day I was in class reading *Seed Magazine*. I saw an adver-

tisement for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. I read the words of Bishop Dubuis: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in

the multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands." I was struck in a very special way. For many years I have seen people suffer. It has never occurred to me that it is Christ who suffers in them! This became the turning point in my life. I felt this was a special call to the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

I wrote to Sister Francesca Kearns who was the Vocation Promoter for the Sisters in Africa. This was the beginning of a relationship of discernment and prayer with the Congregation.

I entered the Postulancy in January 2004. After one year, I entered the Novitiate. During this time, I deepened my prayer life, learned more about the history of our Congregation and worked in many different apostolates.

Throughout this journey, there have been challenges and hardships, as well as great moments of growth, happiness and joy. In all of this, my love for the Incarnate Word has grown.

December 9, 2006, the 25th anniversary of our Congregation in Kenya, will always remain in my heart. As I stepped forward in the



presence of God and His Church, I pronounced my First Profession of Vows with joy in my heart. I felt like a person who had been walking a long distance who has finally met a loved one. This was a special day for me.

Sr. Lillian Anne Healy, our Congregational Leader, received my vows. My heart was at peace for this was what I truly desired!

The journey has just started. This was just another step in my discernment. I am now working at the Ukarimu Centre in Molo. I am happy in my ministry.

I am very grateful to my family members, my directors and all the Sisters for their continued support, love and prayers. I would like to thank Sr. Ignatia Driscoll, my prayer companion, in a very special way. Even though we have never met, she has stood with me in prayer ever since I became affiliated with the Congregation. I hope that we will meet and get to know each other.

May our dear Lord bless each one of you. As my journey continues to unfold I count on your prayers.

*For many years I
have seen people
suffer.
It has never
occurred to me
that it is
Christ who suffers
in them!*



the
MINISTRY
in
ADULT LITERACY

Focusing on the Greater Houston Area

Working in collaboration with others, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word are actively involved in a ministry which focuses on adult literacy in Houston. In the following story, Sister Marie Bernarde Clancy, the Director of the Literacy Center at CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center, answers

questions regarding this effort to empower adults through the ability to read and write.



Sister Marie Bernarde Clancy

What is adult literacy?

I would define adult literacy as the ability of a person to read and write in his or her own language. Illiteracy, therefore, is when someone cannot read or write in their native language, but it is also frequently applied to those individuals in the U.S.A. who may or may not have communications skills in another language, but are unable to read and write in English.

Is illiteracy a problem in the Greater Houston Area?

There are over one million functionally illiterate adults in the Houston metropolitan area, according to a state report. So, yes, I would say we have a literacy problem in Houston. In fact, one in three people in Houston cannot read this sentence.

Is the challenge of illiteracy nationwide?

Yes, the U.S. lags behind many western countries in its literacy levels. In a recent presentation, Margaret Doughty, literacy activist, stated that 11 million U.S. adults, or about one in twenty, have such poor English skills that they can't read a newspaper, understand the directions on a bottle of pills or, in many cases, carry on a basic conversation.



What are the main causes of low levels of English literacy in the Houston area?

First and foremost, there is the enduring reality of poverty. Next, there is the increasing immigrant population. I would say that those are the two main reasons, and to that we could add increasing drop out rates in our schools, learning difficulties that go undetected, low self expectations, and a low persistence to expend the hours to improve to a higher level.

I was a Councilor on the Congregation’s Leadership Team at that time, and I was very interested in the report of the committee.

By mandate of Chapter based on the committee report, Houston was selected as the place for this ministry, and collaboration with others would be required for any type of literacy initiative to be effective.

How and when did the Congregation take up the challenge of literacy?

In the 1970s, Texas, along with other states that border Mexico, began to see a dramatic increase in Spanish speaking immigrants. A large portion of those immigrants could not read and write Spanish, much less English. They came looking for a better life, but found tremendous obstacles because they were not able to communicate.

During the Chapter of 1994, the Congregation passed a Chapter Act that an increased number of Sisters of the Congregation were to become involved directly in ministering to the poor. After the Chapter, a committee was formed to fill out the mandate of the Chapter. The group determined that we would concentrate on Literacy and AIDS. The literacy ministry would be undertaken in the Houston area and AIDS ministry in Africa and Central America.



With whom did you collaborate?

Our Congregation joined in partnership with two other Congregations of Women Religious in Houston, the Dominican Sisters and the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament. Both of those Congregations have a long and distinguished history of ministry in education. Together we formed the Intercongregational Literacy Ministry Core Group. The purpose of the group is to empower adults through literacy skills. Each of the three Congregations have representatives in the group, and our own Sr. Kevina Keating, who was on the Leadership Team, was selected the first chairperson.

In addition we became a partner in the Houston READ Commission which is a non-profit mayoral commission and a coalition of community organizations providing and supporting literacy services. It was through the READ Commission that I received my training in literacy.



Dominicans (front) Sister Julian Giglio and Sister Barbara Ann Collins are co-directors of the CHRISTUS Literacy Center in Galveston. Located in a house in the East End Historical District, the Center has been open for five years.

What does the Core Group do?

We meet regularly to share the progress and challenges of the literacy ministry. We also produce a newsletter, called **WordShare**, which highlights the many success stories of our centers. In addition we host an annual Literacy Social where students tell their own stories and a guest speaker makes a presentation on a topic related to literacy.

Students, such as Rita (center) who is originally from Mexico, have an opportunity to learn English as a second language at the CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center.

When did you become involved in the literacy initiative?

After I completed my term as Councilor in 1998, I knew that I wanted to be involved in the literacy initiative. I was a part of the Intercongregational Literacy Ministry Core Group from its beginning. Others representing our Congregation on that initial group were Sisters Margaret Bulmer, Caroline Flynn, Benedict Shannon, Jacinta Slyne and Margaret Ann Toomey.

I began my literacy ministry at the Literacy Center at the Southwest Community Health Center which began as a collaborative effort of the City of Houston and the Sisters of Charity Health System in 1999. A needs assessment for the facility identified pre-natal care and literacy to be the two greatest needs for the community at this center. So when the clinic was established, an area was also created for a literacy center.

What was your role at the Literacy Center?

I was named Director of the Literacy Center and, after literacy training, began to build a functional program. Sr. Grace O'Brien, an Incarnate Word Sister, joined me there as Assistant Director and worked with me for six years. Sr. Heloise Cruzat, who was formerly the Dominican Prioress, works at the Center now. Sr. Juana Elizabeth Cruz, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, was also involved at the beginning.



She identified the students, phoned them for the first registration, and taught Spanish for the students who were illiterate in their own language.

So you were building from scratch?

Yes and it was very exciting, although challenging as well. The Literacy Center has three offices and one big classroom. There was a lot that needed to be done. We had to identify and order resource materials. A computer lab was developed. And, we had to let the community know that we were opening and what we were offering. The staff of the clinic recruited our first students from among the patient population at the clinic. Our first classes were small, and it was difficult for me, since I don't speak Spanish, to communicate instructions to my first students. Sister Judy Bourg, a School Sister of Notre Dame, who was a social worker at the clinic, filled that spot for me by introducing the students to me and by explaining the rules and regulation of the classes.

What classes do you offer today?

We have two levels of classes. The first level is for those who have never studied English. We let them begin slowly on a computer using software called The Rosetta Stone. This program has been very helpful, and we have found that it gives them a much better sense of the basics of English. That class meets from 1 until 3 in the afternoon, three days a week.

We have a class one night a week from 6:30 until 9. That class usually has more men who work during the day.

We also have a Spanish class. In this class we teach those who have limited reading and writing skills in their own language of Spanish. Maybe they only went to the second grade. It is better for them if they learn the basics in their own language and then once they have a foundation, it will be easier for them to learn English as a second language. Sister Juana Elizabeth, who is from from Guatemala, taught this class for a while. She was excellent and the students loved her. Now, we have students graduating from



The Literacy Center at St. Austin Center was dedicated on May 26, 2005. Located adjacent to Villa de Matel, the building has permitted expansion of literacy services. Gaston Olvera is the director of the Literacy Center at St. Austin.

primary school, with the Mexican Consul giving out certificates of achievement for their graduation.

GED classes for those wishing to earn the equivalent of a high school diploma are also offered. Usually this is a small group but very persistent because they truly want their diploma.

On Friday we have optional "Come and Study" with the computer English program.

What nationalities do you see at the Center?

We mainly help Spanish speaking women from Central America and Mexico who seek to learn English, although periodically we do have students from Vietnam, China and Africa.

How many lives have you touched through the program at this Literacy Center?

We have probably helped about 800 people.



Sister Marie Bernarde Clancy (right) with student Carmen Ortiz and her daughter at the annual Literacy Social.

Is the enrollment fairly stable?

We consistently experience a high enrollment at registration, but the challenge is in keeping students. The number of students that we have can vary for several reasons. Sometimes we lose students when they are offered jobs. Other times they decide to return to their native country. Some of our students who are mothers don't have anyone to look after their children while they are in class.

Is there a story of an individual who learned to read and write in his or her adult years that particularly touched your heart?

I remember Tom Harken who gave a talk at the annual Literacy Social, hosted by the Intercongregational Literacy Ministry Core Group. He never learned to read and write as a child and continued to cover up the fact that he could not read as an adult, even as he had his own business selling vacuum cleaners. Eventually his wife taught him to read by going over books on the kitchen table. Today he is a successful businessman and author. His is a beautiful story of the empowerment of literacy.

Are there other Literacy Centers that have been assisted by Sisters or the Congregation?

Yes! The Literacy Center at the San Jose Clinic has been very active under the direction of Olga Rojas. In Galveston the CHRISTUS Literacy Center is co-directed by two Dominicans, Sisters Julian Giglio and Barbara Ann Collins, who have some 80 combined years of teaching. The Galveston center recently celebrated its fifth birthday.

We are also supportive of the Family Centers in Houston. Sr. Jacinta Slyne set up the computer lab and worked at the center for several years.

The newest Literacy Center is at St. Austin Center, located adjacent to Villa de Matel, the Congregation's Motherhouse. It was dedicated in May 2005. Gaston Olvera is the director of that literacy program. He came to us from the Houston READ Commission and had considerable experience as a literacy instructor. Our own Sister Delphine Kearney was teaching there until recently and was loved by her students. She is on the mend after a fall and we all look forward to her return.

What other Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word have been involved in the literacy initiative?

Besides the ones I have already mentioned, we have had the support of many other Sisters. For example, Sr. Sheila Ann O'Beirne was of tremendous help at the Literacy Center at CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center. Sr. Rebecca Shannon and Sr. Maria Goretti Enright also helped by working with students at Villa de Matel.

Sister Kevina Keating, a former member of the Congregation's Leadership Team, was actively involved during the developmental years of the literacy initiative.



Sister Sheila Ann O'Beirne with students at CHRISTUS Southwest Community Health Center.



In 2003 Sister Kevina Keating, who was actively involved in the development of the literacy program, accepted the Program Builder Award on behalf of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word from then Houston Mayor Lee Brown at the Mayor's Leadership Breakfast.

How is the literacy initiative in keeping with the mission of Congregation?

The foundational call of Bishop Claude Dubuis is “Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering in the persons of a multitude of sick and infirm of every kind, seeks relief at your hands.” That call opens the door for us to respond to the cry for help to all sorts of needs. In the very beginning days of our Congregation, it was for those suffering from yellow fever.

Our literacy ministry is in response to that same call from Bishop Dubuis. Whether helping those with AIDS in Kenya or caring for children in El Salvador, we go where we are called. Our specific ministries may change, but our mission does not. We continue to respond to Jesus Christ who is suffering today in the millions of adults seeking to break the chains of illiteracy and create a better life for themselves and their families.



Sister Delphine Kearney (standing in blue jacket) with students at St. Austin Center.

FACTS ABOUT LITERACY

HOUSTON

Houston has the largest number of dropouts in the state of Texas.

Houston ranked 53rd out of the 69 largest cities studied to determine America’s most literate cities.

HARRIS COUNTY

11 out of 21 Harris County school districts have at least 50 percent of the student population classified as economically disadvantaged.

TEXAS

In 2005, Texas was 49th in verbal SAT scores in the nation and 46th in average math scores.

Texas is 36th in the nation in high school graduation rates.

Texas ranks 47th out of 50 states in terms of English literacy levels.

It cost Texans an estimated \$17.5 billion annually to cover costs associated with illiteracy and lost productivity.

More than 50 percent of adults in the labor force of Texas function at the two lowest literacy levels.

U.S.A.

The American Medical Association reports that 46 percent of adults cannot read and follow medical instructions.

Eleven million U.S. adults – about one in 20 – has such poor English skills that they can’t read a newspaper, understand the directions on a bottle of pills or, in many cases, carry on a basic conversation.

Ninety three million American adults (45 percent of the adult population) have limited reading, writing, and math skills.

Information provided by Literacy Advance of Houston.

Briefs



Sister Lillian Anne Healy, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, met with The Holy Father Benedict XVI on May 2 at the Vatican. He sent greetings and blessings to all of our Sisters and promised to pray for our vocation recruitment efforts. Sister Lillian Anne was in Rome attending the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). The Pope spoke to the UIGC in the Hall of Blessings inside the Vatican on May 8, 2007. More than 850 Sisters representing 800,000 members of Catholic religious institutes throughout the world attended the conference.

PUBLICATION NOW ONLINE

Past issues of *The Word Among Us* are now available for viewing online at the Congregation's websites: www.sistersofcharity.org and in Spanish at www.lashermanasdelacaridad.org.

This new feature of the website will permit people around the world to see the publication and learn more about who we are and why we do what we do as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

SCHUMPERT CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

The celebration of the 100th Anniversary of CHRISTUS Schumpert Health System was celebrated with a Mass at the Cathedral of St. John Berchmans with Fr. Peter B. Mangum as the celebrant. Those attending were our own Sisters, as well as Sisters from other Congregations, priests, associates, hospital staff, former employees and friends of Schumpert Health System. After the Eucharist, the Very Rev. Msgr. Earl V. Provenza, the Diocesan Administrator, shared his personal experiences of the Sisters' kindness to his family especially his sister and brother.

At the lunch which followed, Dr. Tom Royer, CHRISTUS Health President and CEO, toasted the Sisters for the past 100 years of love and dedication to the people of Shreveport and the surrounding area. Dr. Charles Paine, President and CEO of CHRISTUS Schumpert Health System, read a proclamation from the mayor of Shreveport declaring June 1st as Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word Day. Sister Lillian Anne Healy thanked the people of Shreveport for their support of the mission and generosity in the care of the poor and underserved.

ST. JOSEPH VILLA CELEBRATES 60 YEARS

On April 20, CHRISTUS St. Joseph Villa in Salt Lake City celebrated 60 years of service by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word to the residents at the Villa.

The event began with the celebration of the Eucharist with Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City as celebrant. That evening, there was a banquet at the Little America Hotel which included a showing of a video of the history of St. Joseph Villa. Several Sisters who served there were interviewed for the video.

Sr. Antoninus Martin received the Continuum of Care Award on behalf of the Congregation. As part of her official acceptance of the award, Sr. Antoninus sang a song she composed in which she noted the care and sincere dedication of the staff, Sisters and friends of St. Joseph Villa, as well as her own love for the ministry.



**CCVI Associates Gathering
April 13-15, 2007
Villa de Matel**

The 2007 CCVI Associates Gathering, held at Villa de Matel on April 13-15, 2007, was a wonderful celebration of the 25 year history of the Associates, as well as a time of sharing and planning for the future. The theme for the Gathering was based on Isaiah 6:8, "Here We Are, Lord; Send Us!" Throughout the weekend, Associates and Sisters enjoyed opportunities for

inspiring prayer and liturgical services, social gatherings, quiet times, and sharing of information and ideas. In addition to many of the Sisters, who attended all or parts of the weekend, attendees included forty-five Associates, from Houston, Long Beach, California, Salt Lake City, Utah and Shreveport, Louisiana.

DOMINICANS PRESENT PARTNERS IN PREACHING AWARD

The Dominican Sisters of Houston honored our Congregation with their *Partners in Preaching Award* on June 1, 2007. The Dominicans presented the award because of their "desire to affirm those who embrace the quest for Gospel justice, and whose lives exemplify significant commitment to that goal."

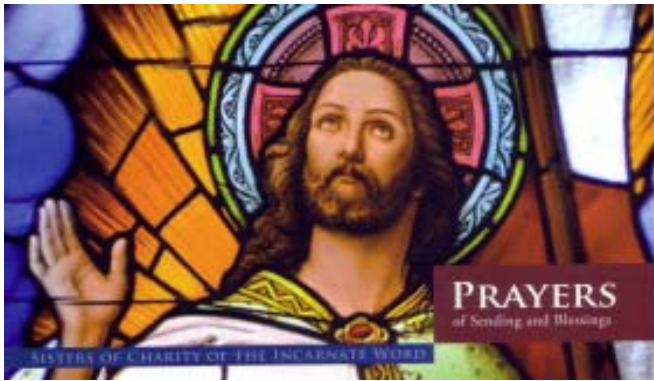
Dominican Prioress Sister Marygrace Peters made the following comments at the presentation: "What I have discovered as I looked at the history of our two congregations is that we have been collaborating all along even before it was fashionable! Dedication to the Incarnate Word of God, something we share in common and preach from the pulpit of our lives creates in us an integral connection."

She continued, "Many of the Incarnate Word Sisters attended and graduated from Sacred Heart

Dominican College, especially its Nursing and Education Departments. As Sisters then we sort of grew up together from the college's inception in the 1940's until its closure in the seventies. The friendships formed there continue to sustain us as we serve in various communities in Beaumont and in the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese and other places."

On the occasion of this recognition the Dominicans presented our Congregation with a bronze sculpture of the Visitation, the work of Sister Mary Peter Tremonte, O.P., now deceased.





A booklet, *Sending and Blessing Prayers*, written by the CCVI Sisters from Houston and San Antonio which was created during the Sponsorship Conference last October, has been printed. If you would like to have a copy, please contact Liana Fernandez-Baca at 713-580-6584 or by e-mail, lbaca@ccvi-vdm.org.



Sister Ricca Dimalibot has completed her three-year residency program in Family Medicine at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. The Graduation Ceremony was held June 15 at the Crain Garden of the hospital.

SISTER JOHN MARIE RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Sister John Marie Crowley received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Socially Responsible Investment Coalition (SRIC) at the organization's 25th Anniversary Celebration in San Antonio on April 18, 2007.

Headquartered in San Antonio at the Oblate School of Theology, SRIC is a coalition of religious congregations, institutions and individuals who work to balance their economic policies and practices with their faith and social concerns.

Sister John Marie, a mentor to many in her efforts to bring about corporate responsibility both nationally and in Texas, was introduced by Brother Thomas Krieter, SCS, who recalled her traveling to the headquarters of General Electric to ensure GE's withdrawal from managing Sandia Labs. He said that she "quietly but firmly spoke truth to power."



He added, "We are in your debt. You have stood for the poor, the downtrodden, those without voice. You have made sure that women were lifted up. You have believed in community development so communities have funds to help with building the infrastructure they need for a better life."

Sister Susan Mika, OSB, SRIC Executive Director, presented Sister John Marie a bouquet of roses in appreciation for her work.



October 20, 2007

is the date for the
3rd Annual Nun Run
 benefiting CHRISTUS Southwest
 Community Health Center.
 Visit www.sistersofcharity.org
 for Registration and Supporter Forms.



Calendar

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| August 1-4 | LCWR National Assembly
Kansas City |
| September 8 | Houston CCVI Associates
Commitment |
| September 22 | “Global Ecclesiology” by Dr.
Richard Gaillardetz
Spirit and Life Conference,
Villa de Matel |
| October 16-19 | Region 12 LCWR – San Juan,
Texas |
| October 20 | Nun Run – Villa de Matel to
Galveston |
| October 25 | Foundation Day |

Serving With Gladness



If you are a Catholic woman
 who feels called to serve God,
 visit the Vocation area of our website:
www.sistersofcharity.org.



*Praise God from whom
all blessings flow!*

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
P.O. Box 230969
Houston, TX 77223-0969



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 1654