



Grey Nuns Regional Voice

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St. Joseph Area, Lexington, MA

Celebrating With Our South American Sisters

By June Ketterer SGM, Marion Connelly, SGM, and Louise Bourgeois, SGM

December 2008 marked the 20th Anniversary of the founding of our mission in La Parada, Colombia, by Sr. Louise Bourgeois, Sr. Yvette Bouchard and the late Sr. Yvonne Viens. By continuing to reach out with generosity and compassion, this mission is still going strong with new membership, including native Sisters. Our ten day odyssey was a long awaited and extremely fulfilling visit full of hope and inspiration. Highlights of our journey are chronicled here.

Sunday, November 30, 2008

After 12 long hours of traveling, we three Sisters with various physical challenges, arrived to an enthusiastic greeting by Sister Jeanne Hebert, Leader of the Mission in Colombia, Sister Liliana Blanco Casanova, Sister Yvette Bouchard, Mercedes Rosario de Martinez and Flor Angela Rojas of FANA. For those of us returning after a long absence of many years, we took notice of many changes such as the increased traffic and many improvements at the airport in Bogota. The one thing that didn't change, was the enormous hospitality we experienced at our reception at the Grey Nuns residence. This being the first day of Advent, we took time to praise God for the safe trip, for all whom we met along the way, and especially for our Grey Nun Sisters and friends who welcomed us so graciously.



Sisters gathered around the Christmas tree in the Grey Nuns residence in Paraiso Quiba, Ciudad Bolivar, Bogota, Colombia.; (l to r) Sisters Marion Connelly, Yuditth Mesa Almeida, Yvette Bouchard, Louise Bourgeois, Jeanne Hebert, and Jeannine Coulombe.

Monday, December 1, 2008

On a beautiful sunny day, we traveled the narrow winding roads to the Barrio Paraiso outside of Bogota to have lunch with our sister missionaries, Sisters Yvette Bouchard, Jeannine Coulombe and Yuditth Mesa Almeida. Our sisters live among the poor, who displaced from their farms and homes, took shelter in the mountains for safety reasons, struggling to raise their families and building their homes brick by brick. At this mission, the Sisters prepare children and adults for the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, and Marriage. Despite the poverty, the children are so active and happy – there are so many children that they have to go to school in two hour shifts. We walked away with a prayer in our hearts for the people of Paraiso and in thanksgiving for the Grey Nuns presence, witnessing to God's love for all.



(l to r) Sisters Liliana Blanco and Jeanne Hebert

Tuesday, December 2

Maria Lucia, the Director, welcomed us to the Hogar Margarita in Bogota, a home for pregnant women who are considering adoption for their newborns. While awaiting the birth of their babies, the women are taught computer skills so they can find jobs in the future. Hogar Margarita is named after St. Marguerite d'Youville who always had a special place in her heart for children. Over lunch, we shared memories of the foundation of the Hogar and the many mothers and children who lived here over the years.



(l to r) Mercedes Rosario de Martinez, foundress of Hogar Margarita, and her daughter, Maria Lucia, at Hogar Margarita



Homes in Barrio Paraiso Quiba built in installments as the people are able to work and improve their living conditions.

At the end of the day, we were invited to dinner at the home of Flor Angela Rojas, a Social Worker from FANA and her sisters Gloria and Inez.

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Arriving at their home, we were greeted by 25 guests who worked at FANA and were overjoyed to see Sisters Marion and Louise with whom they had worked for so many years. Home by midnight after a long day, we were filled with memories of struggles and blessings in our heads.

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

Today a Eucharistic Celebration, followed by a dinner, was held at FANA (Foundation for the Adoption of Abandoned Children) recognizing the 30 years since the first Grey Nuns (Sisters Marion Connelly, Alice Moran and Laura Rabida) arrived in Bogota and 18 years of Grey Nuns service at FANA. Presently there are 20 babies and 25 children awaiting adoption as new Colombian laws make international adoption more difficult. Mercedes Rosario de Martinez, Foundress of FANA, holds fast to her belief that every child should have a loving family. This philosophy continues to drive the work at FANA today.



(l to r) Sr. Marion Connelly, Mercedes Rosario de Martinez, Sisters June Ketterer and Louise Bourgeois at FANA

Thursday, December 4, 2008

Today we traveled quite early to Cucuta accompanied by Sr. Jeanne Hebert and arrived at La Parada where our sisters live. Waiting for us were Sisters Gloria Mercedes Mesa Almeida, Dolores Blanchard and Mayra Alejandra Avendano where once again, we experienced the Grey Nuns spirit of hospitality. After much needed rest, we attended Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish. With no books available, the many in attendance sang all the hymns by heart. God must be pleased with the respectful and enthusiastic participation at their Eucharistic Celebrations.



(l to r) Sisters Liliana Blanco, Louise Bourgeois, Yvette Bouchard, Nicole Fournier, Congregational Secretary, and Aurise Delaurier in La Parada, Cucuta

Friday, December 5, 2008

Sr. Louise Bourgeois, one of the founders of the mission in La Parada twenty years ago, took Sr. June for a walk around town. Several people we saw remembered Sr. Louise. We stopped at one home to visit with a beautiful sixteen year old girl named Louisa after Sr. Louise, who has kept a special place in her heart and prayers for this young woman. The remainder of the day was spent with the Grey Nun Associates who arrived from Bogota after a 17 hour bus ride for a meeting of the Central Committee of the Associates. As the Associates gave witness to their charity work over the course of their two days of meetings, it was inspiring to see how Marguerite's unconditional love and compassion touches the hearts of so many people in today's world.



Grey Nuns and Associates of St. Marguerite from Bogota and La Parada

Sunday, December 7, 2008

Today was the 20th Anniversary of the arrival of the Grey Nuns in La Parada. The seeds that Sisters Louise Bourgeois, Yvette Bouchard and Yvonne Viens planted have grown fully into the present. At a special Mass, Fr. Baelan, p.s.s., paid tribute to the courage of the Grey Nuns who served here over the past 20 years. We never know the outcome of the original risk takers as each new day evolves with its own challenges and graces.

Monday, December 8, 2008

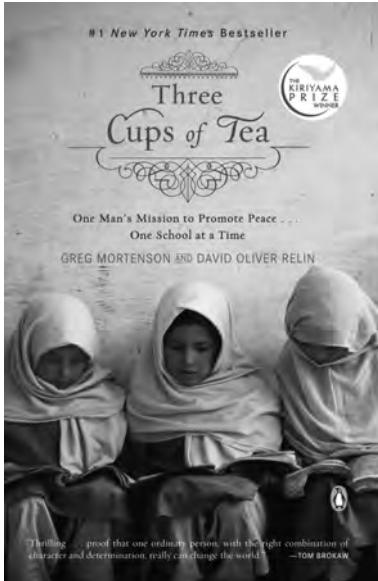
We learned that today, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, is the day on which children make their first communion. It is a very special day for the communicants and their families. One hundred children marched along a muddy dirt road in the rain to the church. It was an unusual sight and one that brought life to the town. We prayed for each one as they filed by to welcome Jesus into their hearts.

On December 9 we ended our journey, departing for home with mixed emotions. We are proud of our Grey Nun Missionaries in South America and their evident love of the poor for whom they serve. God has blessed each of us and all of us in the way best suited to our needs - it is part of the mystery of life. The charism and spirit of St. Marguerite gloriously lives on.

Ecology Justice & Peace

Three Cups of Tea – Some Good News

Greg Mortenson who writes of his experiences in his book, *Three Cups of Tea*, will receive Pakistan’s highest civil award, the “Star of Pakistan” on March 23, 2009 in Islamabad. Pakistan’s government is honoring him for his courage and humanitarian efforts to promote education. As of 2008, Greg Mortenson has established over 78 schools in rural areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan providing education to 28,000 children including 18,000 girls. When Greg’s life was at stake for his efforts to build schools and promote education, he gained the trust of Islamic leaders. On Page 199 of his book, we read:



Dear Compassionate of the Poor, our Holy Koran tells us all children should receive an education, including our daughters and sisters. Your noble work follows the highest principles of Islam to tend the poor and sick...We direct all clerics in Pakistan not to interfere with your noble intentions. You have our permission, blessings and prayers.

As a result of this judgment by the Supreme Council of Ayatollahs in Iran, Greg Mortenson’s life was spared and his light is shining brightly in the darkness of ignorance.

Three Cups Of Tea is a good read, and an inspiration.

(Information was gathered from Greg Mortenson’s website. Image courtesy of Central Asia Institute.)

Jesuit Priest Discusses Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

By Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

On November 9, 2008, the Grey Nuns Ecology, Justice and Peace Committee sponsored a lecture by Rev. Raymond Helmick, SJ, on the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict at Youville Place, Lexington, MA. Father Helmick, a theology professor at Boston College, has monitored the conflict in the Middle East for decades and is currently teaching a course on the subject. During the 1980’s, he served as a Track II negotiator between the United States government and the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization).

This lecture focused on Hamas’ victory in the Palestinian Parliamentary elections of 2006 and its implication for Israeli/Palestinian peace. Father Helmick, who has corresponded with Hamas leader, Khaled M’ishal, described the Islamist resistance movement as supportive of a two-state solution. Fr. Helmick emphasized that the Hamas’ election win necessitated including them in the negotiations. He said, “None of the peace efforts have any future if they are premised on the destruction of Hamas. It used to be said that the PLO is the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. But that is not so anymore.” Fr. Helmick noted that Palestinians

were morally and legally obligated to resist the Israeli occupation, but their only hope lay in disciplined nonviolent resistance. “Even stones would discredit them,” he said. “Granting Palestinians their rights is the only way Israel is going to be safe,” he added.



Claire Schaeffer-Duffy and Father Helmick

Fr. Helmick is the author of “*Negotiating Outside The Law: Why Camp David Failed*,” Pluto Press 2004. Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, an attendee at the lecture, is a member of the St. Francis/St. Therese Catholic Worker, Worcester, MA, and is an occasional contributor for the National Catholic Reporter.

An Instrument of God's Providence

By Marie Cecilia Lefevre, SGM

The seeds of my vocation were planted first of all at home, but certainly were watered and cared for in my kindergarten through second grade at Holy Family Academy [Lexington, MA]. And Sister Genevieve was an instrument of God's Providence, may her name be remembered with veneration.

(Words of Shawn Folsom now Father Cassian, a Benedictine monk and Prior of a monastery in Norcia, Italy.)



"An instrument of God's Providence" are words that could be said of the thousands whose lives have been touched by Saint Marguerite d'Youville or one of her spiritual daughters, the Sisters of Charity, "Grey Nuns". We bring you the story of one such life that you may join us in praise and thanksgiving to God whose Providence works in mysterious ways throughout centuries of time.

Shawn's family moved to Connecticut when he was in the third grade but that limited contact was enough to make a lasting impression on him and his family right up to the time of Sister Genevieve Cousineau's death in 1982. He writes: "Sister Genevieve was my kindergarten through second grade teacher. In 1960 and in all the years since then she has been a dear friend and in fact, a mentor. She always encouraged my vocation and was always a sign to me of the love of God. To my mind she exemplified the spirit of the Grey Nuns - she was a credit to your community."

Sr. Genevieve became one of the foundresses of the Grey Nuns first mission in Nigeria. She opened St. Monica's College for girls and acted as Principal and teacher. It seems that the entire Folsom family knew and loved Sr. Genevieve. Shawn treasures a statue of the Sacred Heart that the first grade gave the family in memory of his brother Jay. His mother kept in touch with Sr. Genevieve. She had the children write notes to her when she went to Africa. She gave Shawn's youngest sister "Genevieve" as a middle

name because of her admiration for Sr. Genevieve. Another sister is named "Marguerite" after Marguerite d'Youville.

Shawn had wanted to be a priest since he was five years old, but during high school he abandoned the idea - the usual adolescent confusion. The first year of college was a year of new conversion to the faith. He wrote to Sr. Genevieve to ask the difference between Catholic and Protestant Christianity. He said: "The fact that I would turn to her with such a question indicates that she was someone I looked up to and trusted." In June, 1981, the doctors gave Sr. Genevieve two to four months to live. (Actually, she courageously battled cancer for 16 months.) When she came home from the hospital she immediately began readjusting her life so as to enjoy it to the fullest during the time that remained. She continued to do all she could to render service and to sustain her many friendships. She was happy and grateful when Shawn came to visit her at the Grey Nuns Provincial House, Lexington, MA.

We pick up Shawn's vocational story in 2008 when The Very Reverend Cassian Folsom is Prior of the Community of Maria Sedes Sapientiae in the Monastero di San Benedetto, Norcia, Italy. His unusual career as a Benedictine monk began at St. Meinrad Archabbey in 1979. Immediately after his ordination in 1984, his Abbot sent him to Sant'Anselmo, the Benedictine University in Rome, for a doctorate in liturgy.



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He then taught in the school of theology at St. Meinrad until 1993. At the request of Sant'Anselmo, his abbot assigned him to teach in the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. He was a full-time professor for seven years as well as Pro-President of the Institute.

In 1998, with his Abbot's permission and the backing of the Abbot-Primate of the Order, Shawn founded a new monastic community in Rome. Their mission is to re-evangelize western culture just as Saint Benedict did centuries ago. At the invitation of the Archbishop of Spoleto-Norcia, the community of three moved to Norcia to take over the abandoned monastery that had been without monks for almost 200 years. It was built over the birthplace of Saint Benedict and Saint Scholastica in the 10th century.

The intercession of St. Marguerite and Sister Genevieve was desperately needed in 2007 when cancer was found in Father Cassian's right and left femur. This resulted in a series of treatments, a month-long hospitalization for a stem cell transplant, followed by a month-long convalescence. Father Cassian expressed deep gratitude for the outpouring of prayer and support he received. In December, his doctor exclaimed "ottima risposta," meaning perfect recovery.

The following report is taken from the *Monastery of Saint Benedict Newsletter* (January 2009). "With the happy problem of a steady stream of vocations and inquirers, we began looking for a larger more quiet location for the future Abbey. After much discussion, prayer and negotiations with the Archdiocese, we purchased from them a 16th century monastery which sits on a ridge above the town of Norcia. The structure has been severely damaged by earthquakes and neglect. There remains for us an enormous problem of design, labor and fundraising to make this our home." Father Cassian is confident they will be successful and said, "When we started the fundraising project, a practical person would say, 'Given the present financial crisis,

you must be mad to embark on such a venture!' Well, call us fools for Christ! We are confident in Divine Providence." Do these words not recall those of St. Marguerite, "I abandon everything to Providence; all my confidence is in it."?

"Great hopes, great possibilities!" Father Cassian says, "While we plan for the future, however, we need to have our feet firmly planted in the present, and the daily needs of the monastery remain a pressing concern. We rely on the goodness and generosity of friends and benefactors to help us cover operational expenses for 15 hungry monks. While our daily life of labor and prayer may appear rather ordinary, Benedictine spirituality focuses precisely on sanctifying ordinary life."

The spirit of St. Marguerite that the young Shawn Folsom recognized long ago in Sister Genevieve, "an instrument of God's Providence," is still alive and well in the many lives touched by Grey Nuns for over two centuries. It is heartwarming to hear stories like Father Cassian's that give cause for praise and gratitude to our Provident God.

To learn more about or to make a contribution to the community Maria Sedes Sapientiae in the Monasterio di San Benedetto, we invite you to visit their website www.osbnorcias.org - you will be amazed.

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Associates of Saint Marguerite d'Youville (ASMY)



Caring and Sharing This past November and December, the Associates of St. Marguerite d'Youville were very busy as they conducted two special projects to assist the poor and needy. The first was conceived and coordinated by long time Associate Henrietta McElhenny. Throughout the month of November, Associates were invited to purchase or hand make donations for the Little Home for the Wanderers. Over \$500.00 in both cash and quality winter clothing items were donated, purchased or hand knitted. The donations from this successful drive were then delivered to Boston as the Associates wanted to help young infants and children stay warm throughout our long New England winter.

The annual Thanksgiving Liturgy held on November 26, 2008 at Youville Place, Lexington, MA, provided once again a wonderful opportunity for the larger Youvillian family to become involved in a project of outreach to the poor and hungry. Coordinated and sponsored by the Associates of St. Marguerite d'Youville,

and assisted by the Grey Nuns and the residents and staff of Youville Place, a very successful collaboration was realized. At this liturgy, over twenty full bags and boxes of non perishable food items were collected along with generous monetary gifts totaling \$500.00.

On December 4, ten of our active Associates began a pilgrimage day of sharing and caring as they journeyed to Lawrence, Massachusetts. They stopped first for a wonderful visit and to pray and sing with the Grey Nuns who are residents at Mary Immaculate Health Care. Welcomed by Sister Jeanne Poor, each Associate was delighted to share the joy and happiness which our visit brought to Sisters Alice Moran, Maria Couto and Berthe Asselin. The Associates then journeyed to the Cor Unum Meal Center at St. Patrick's Parish in South Lawrence where they had the wonderful opportunity to meet and pray with the Director and Coordinator of Volunteers. After bringing in our food donations, a



The Associates gathered to load up car trunks with hats, mittens, gloves, scarves and other assorted baby items for delivery to the Home for Little Wanderers.

presentation was then made of the \$500.00 check. The Associates were then escorted to the meal center where they were given a tour and some training as they prepared to volunteer their time and talent in serving the poor. Some set up tables, some served juice, coffee or milk, some served the meals and desserts while others cleared the tables. For two hours the Associate volunteers were kept busy yet grateful to help, in some small way, the poor and hungry who came non stop through the doors of Cor Unum. All of the Associates who attended this day of caring and sharing felt greatly blessed. They learned it is not enough to just collect food and money, but all the more valuable to give of your labor, smiles and love walking in the same steps of St. Marguerite d'Youville in service to the poor, sick and infirm.

Update from the Toledo Our Toledo Associates had a wonderful Christmas gathering early in December 2008 at the St. Anne Mercy campus where they exchanged fellowship, shared music and enjoyed a potluck meal together. Gift cards were collected for the Marguerite d'Youville Program in addition to making a donation from our treasury. The Toledo Associates are busy now setting a calendar for the year, including general meetings, Executive Council meetings, retreat and commitment dates. They will be continuing to use the "Foundation in Faith" Handbook on Prayer at their general meetings. Another priority this year is to extend invitations to several people to join the Associates program and to set up an Orientation schedule.



The Associates load up their cars for the journey to the Cor Unum Meal Center in Lawrence.

Staying Connected

Pastoral Visit from Sr. Jacqueline St. Yves

Sr. Jacqueline St. Yves, Congregational Leader, made her Pastoral Visit with the Sisters of St. Joseph Area from October 31 through November 20, 2008. The theme of her visit was simply to “live community with you as you live it.” She opened the visit with a Day of Prayer in the chapel at Youville Place on November 3. Most of the Sisters from the missions were happy to attend and deeply appreciated this time of quiet and prayer with inspirational words from their Leader. They also loved the way Sr. Jacqueline affirmed them, as she reminded them of all they had done for the Congregation and for the poor. Although not numerous, the Sisters in the USA, “have been pioneers, trusting that the works which you had begun would be continued by lay people, like Covenant Health Systems.... You can be justly proud,” she proclaimed. The visit was both refreshing and encouraging. Sr. Jacqueline’s schedule was quite full as she managed to have an interview with all the Sisters in the area in their respective residences. It was inspiring to see her among them giving affirmations and encouragement. She even visited the Holy Cross Cemetery, Malden, MA, and prayed to the Sisters who were buried there, as they are the very foundation of all the ministries in the United States. On November 19 during a special prayer service, Sr. Jacqueline’s closing address was full of encouragement and affirmation. She praised the Sisters for their commitment to prayer and action in response to the needs of the entire world, and for their love for one another. She encouraged them to continue in charity, and in the spirit of the last testament of Saint Marguerite d’Youville.



(l to r) Sr. Jacqueline and Sr. June Ketterer at the closing pizza supper



(l to r) Sisters Theresa Rousseau and Irene Harper visiting from Lawrence, MA

Neighbors Who Care Update

Neighbors Who Care (NWC) is pleased to announce the addition of two new volunteers, Arlene Lopez who is an Associate of St. Marguerite d’Youville, and Jim Callahan who is the husband of Nancy Mulvihill, a Board member of Neighbors Who Care. Everyone associated with the program, staff and clients, are so grateful for their generosity. NWC continues to grow its client base with new referrals from sources such as the Mayor’s Office in Waltham, the Council on Aging, Springwell, which provides Elder Services, and several other social service agencies. Our homebound clients have a variety of needs such as transportation to medical appointments, companionship, and assistance with grocery shopping. The friendships formed between volunteers and clients are tremendously rewarding. This past year NWC provided over 1,000 hours of volunteer services to the clients in the greater Waltham, MA community. NWC is eternally grateful for all the support and prayers it receives throughout the year.

Please visit us at www.neighborswhocare.net.

Christmas 2008: Leadership Team Open House... Friendly Faces



(l to r) Sisters Eileen Otting and Helene Georges



Sr. Marie Doucette



(l to r) Sr. Gladys Marhefka and Sr. Blanche Plante open their mystery gifts.

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GREY NUNS REGIONAL VOICE



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Welcome to Sr. Marcia!

Marcia Wiley, SGM, was officially transferred to St. Joseph Area on January 31, 2009 to the delight of the Sisters in the USA. Born in Toledo, Ohio, Sr. Marcia spent most of her life of consecration and service as a Grey Nun in the Western Provinces of Canada. She is an RN from St. Vincent's Hospital and received a Bachelor of Nursing Degree from the University of Alberta, Canada. She was a Specialist in Hospital Chaplaincy and obtained a Master's Degree in Pastoral Art's. Sr. Marcia served on the Provincial Leadership Team as Provincial and also as Treasurer. She has now returned to her native city to live with her 96 year old mother in order to be a supportive presence for her and ministers as a volunteer in the Mature Health Connections Program at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo. Sr. Marcia has come "full circle" as she said, returning to her home in Toledo.



A HAPPY AND BLESSED EASTER SEASON TO ALL!

**St. Marguerite d'Youville Center for Spirituality,
1977 Mass. Ave., Lexington MA**

*For information on upcoming and ongoing events,
please contact Sr. Gladys Marhefka at
(781) 674-7406 (Day) or (781) 862-0938 (Evening).*

Visit our "renewed" website at
www.grey-nuns.org
to catch up on "What's New" in the St. Joseph Area
including a completely revamped
Ecology, Justice and Peace section.

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