

Blessings

CONGREGATION OF SISTERS OF ST. AGNES

a newsletter for benefactors and friends of the Sisters of St. Agnes

Dear Friends...



GENERAL SUPERIOR

Sr. Joann Samb's

It is my honor to introduce to you the first edition of BLESSINGS, the development publication for the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes. Among our first responsibilities in initiating CSA's newly established Office of Development was to choose a title for this publication, one that would express our vision for collaborating with you in the development ministry. Many creative suggestions were submitted by CSA members and colleagues.

Lorna Stephany is a graphic artist who has assisted CSA over the past eight years, designing our promotional materials. Lorna knows the community well and while creating the layout for the publication, suggested the name, BLESSINGS. Lorna shared the following: "I think that it is a perfect title for a CSA publication because the sisters affirm how much individuals matter; whether it is a woman in Nicaragua, an inmate on death row, or a child in

New York. The sisters alter others' lives immeasurably. I believe that all of us owe a debt to someone for caring about us and perhaps leading us to the blessings we now have in our lives. I think that CSA's mission is to show individuals that they matter and thereby make the world a better place because of that caring and compassion."

Lorna's tribute is both humbling and challenging for us as members of the congregation. Our mission calls us to dare a Gospel response to the urgent needs of our day, inspired by the zeal, courage, and faith of our founders. We are inspired as well by you, our faithful friends and colleagues. You partner with us in en-fleshing our mission through your prayer and presence, your commitment to service, and your generosity in sharing resources to support our ministries and our elderly sisters.

With you as our blessing partners, CSA can continue to affirm individuals, especially those most vulnerable, and demonstrate how precious they are. We look forward to the many blessings that await us as we take this journey together.

SPRING 2007 In this issue...

[Our Retired Sisters](#)

[Sojourner Truth House](#)

[Sr. Katie's Special Children](#)

[2007 Jubilarians](#)

[Obituaries](#)

[Letter from Sr. Deborah](#)

Our Retired Sisters



Sr. Perpetua Michelin
Professed 1935

Welcome to the retirement campus of the Sisters of St. Agnes, which more than eighty of our retired sisters call home. Enter through the main doorway and be delightfully taken in by the beauty of plants, trees, flowers, and “comfy” furniture. Encounter our senior women with bright smiles and pleasant greetings, meandering through the lobby. Each of these women has a story to share – stories that bring tears to our eyes reflecting how much our hearts are touched. In each issue of BLESSINGS, one of our retired sisters will invite us in to share in her life. It is a privilege to introduce these women who have creatively sculpted CSA as we know it today, and to share their lives and stories!

Allow me to introduce Sister Perpetua Michelin or “Petchy” for short, who is in fact 90 years young. Petchy is small in stature but nurtures a huge heart! Her charming laugh which borders on giggling, and the bright sparkle in her eyes are alluring, and they draw one in to spend hours with her. Petchy is an artist, and it is here at Nazareth Court and Center, where she creates, with pen and brush and spirit, becoming lost in the act of creation. But it is art, along with card games, and reports on the status of friends she has checked in with, plus reviews on the latest articles or novel she has just finished reading, and a commentary on the delicacies of the latest meal, that truly complete much of sister’s life.

I asked Petchy if she could share a glimpse of her life of ministry with us. With little prodding, she bubbled forth with an overview of her life. *“I have a masters degree in fine arts and taught grade school and high school level in New London, Two Rivers, and Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; Hayes, KS, Elmhurst, IL and Mount Bayou, MS. In the mid 70’s, I decided I wanted to work among the poor and moved to the Northwestern part of Mississippi to a town called Mount Bayou to join another sister.*



Sister Benedict Dorey worked as a home health care nurse in the late 1960’s. I traveled there each summer to teach in summer school and was able to get a taste of the deep South. After three summers, there was no doubt in my mind that I loved these people, and I was ready to live among them. I stayed for thirteen years. I thank God everyday for the privilege I had to work among the poor. It was the most soul satisfying experience of my life.”

What completes the picture of Sister’s work among the poor is the image of her short of stature profile, accompanied by a frisky puppy, “peanuts” and Sister Benedict, making a home in a very fragile house trailer, out in the middle of no where. Nothing in life was easy, and getting anywhere meant traveling a distance in the scorching heat of the deep South. Yet, this is what Petchy embraced and loved with a passion.

Sister Perpetua then shared: *“Now, in my retirement years, I am extremely grateful for a community of sisters to live and pray with each day. I enjoy sewing, card playing, reading, and I am close to my family. Looking back I feel very blessed to have touched so many people’s lives.”*

For more information about our retired sisters and what you can do to ensure quality of life for them in the future, please feel free to contact the CSA director of development: Sister Deborah Walter, CSA, 920-907-2311 or dwalter@csasisters.org

We can't have justice without love



Associate Susan Schaefer with fellow Sojourner Truth House volunteer, Frances Harrell

"My son got murdered – do you have something I can wear to the funeral?"

A grieving Sojourner Truth House client

"The owner down at the gas station lets me use the microwave to heat some food once a day."

A homeless Sojourner Truth House client

"What's my philosophy of life?

Compassion and mercy

...we can't have justice without love."

Susan Schaefer, CSA associate,
Sojourner Truth House volunteer

Susan, a CSA associate for about two years, moves through the day with dignity and appreciation for those she ministers with. "I never would have considered the CSA associate relationship had it not been for... the sisters... with their intellectual expanse and commitment to faith. I am drawn to Sojourner Truth House by the spirit the sisters embody - Tikkun Olam - a commitment to healing the world."

Driving past boarded-up storefronts, littered street corners and dark intersections is the only way to get to Sojourner Truth House in Gary, Indiana. No matter which direction you approach from, it's the same scene. Turn into the fenced parking area before 9 a.m. and you'll see clients waiting - women, children and men who come for help. Inside, staff and volunteers gear up for the day's onslaught of needs, problems and challenges. The doors open, the activity level rises, the noise of conversations, questions, computers, telephones, doors opening and closing, heavy boots and worn sneakers, and the all too familiar cry of hungry, tired or bored children increases.

Five sisters, three Sisters of St. Agnes and two Poor Handmaids, work side by side at Sojourner Truth House, along with volunteers like Susan Schaefer. Susan has spent two to four days a week there for the past five years. "It's a continuation of my family's values which include service," she says. "I'm a nurse by profession, and am not afraid of 'acute.' Much of what we live with here, is 'acute' - homelessness, addictions, mental illness, poverty, unemployment, serious and ongoing health issues, plus the day-to-day living that is complicated by lack of basic needs. I see myself as not separate - the people who come here are not 'the other' - they are my sisters and brothers

As many as one hundred people a day pass through the doors of Sojourner Truth House, seeking food, clothing, shelter, health assistance, transportation, home furnishings, connections to basic needs. Susan says, "I love that different people find different ways to keep the place going. A bit here, a bit there, today we're able to piece together someone's prescription expense, tomorrow provide a coat and mittens, the next day a home for a battered woman. It's a constant effort to replenish the basic resources and meet the direct client service needs."

For more information regarding the Associate relationship in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, please feel free to contact Ellen Swan, Director of Associates, eswan@csasisters.org or 920-907-2318.

Sr. Katie's Special Children in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua

"In 1987, as a member of the Sisters of St. Agnes, and having had many years of teaching experience in the United States, I left the states and came to Nicaragua and taught. I saw first hand the painful frustration of parents of special needs children who were in school. I asked to create a pilot program to serve the special needs children. I began with 87 children in 1991, not knowing what the future would be! Today I can happily report, we have 234 children enrolled in the Center. Because we are the only school serving these children on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, families have actually moved to this location to have their children enrolled."

Thus begins the simple but powerful story of Sister Katie Schilling, an energetic member of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, who is the founder and general director of the Maureen Courtney Center for Integral Education, serving special needs children and young adults in Nicaragua.

"The children who attend the Center come from very poor families and do not pay tuition. However the parents volunteer time, and they bring fruit they have harvested for the lunch program. Half of the salaries for the teachers come from the Nicaraguan Government and the other half has to be raised by friends and donors who care about the children's well being."

Is it worth the effort, time, and energy of the families and Katie to keep this school alive and growing? For Katie there is no doubt! *"Two young women are hearing impaired. They successfully learned sign language, and graduated from the school. We shared in their joy at accomplishing such a wonderful success in their lives. The greater joy however manifests itself today, as they are both teaching in the school! They now devote their lives to working with hearing impaired children. How much more clearly could the mission of the school, the memory of Sister Maureen Courtney, and the promise of transformation of others' lives show itself!"*



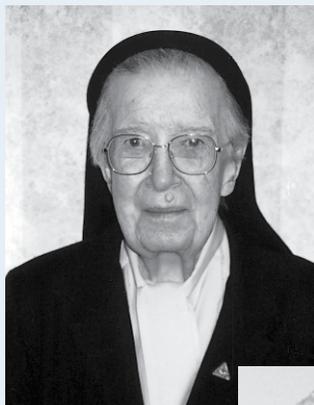


Katie goes on: "Other skills that are taught to the students are baking, carpentry, and sewing. Graduates have gone on to find jobs and keep them, and are able to make a living wage. Through creating a positive and successful future for children who are learning disabled, hearing impaired with emotional problems, and developmentally challenged, the future for many in Nicaragua can be permanently changed. There is hope that many will move out of the helpless circumstances life has handed them, and not only transform their own lives, but the lives of others as well."

However, right now there is desperate need for two additional classrooms. The all purpose classrooms were housed in the basement of an old convent that has been condemned. One of the student's fathers is a carpenter and will donate his services; however \$15,000 is needed for materials, cement and the foundation. Sister Katie and the families cannot do this alone. They must ask for assistance from people who care about these special children and who have great potential to help them, or these critical needs will not be met.

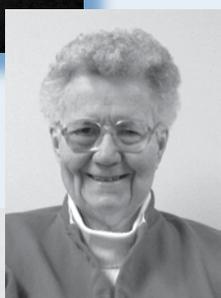
Join us in celebrating our

2007 Jubilarians



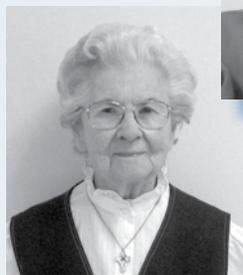
90 Years - 1917

Sr. Claude Feldner



80 Years - 1927

Sr. Irma Reichling



75 Years - 1932

Sr. Claudine McCormick

Sr. Irene Gussert



70 Years - 1937

Sr. Bernadine Dreiling

Sr. Dorothy Roesch

Sr. Judine Ebsch

Sr. Madonna Dionis

Sr. Marita Becher

Sr. Mary Monica Kutch

Sr. Regina Marie Werner

60 Years - 1947

Sr. Bertha Bumann

Sr. Bertha Ann Miller

Sr. David Ennis

Sr. Joseph McArdle

Sr. Lucille Bertram

Sr. Mary Neff

Sr. Mary Alice Walters

50 Years - 1957

Sr. Ann McKean

Sr. Anne Jude Van Lanen

Sr. Carla Crave

Sr. Dianne Bergant

Sr. Esperanza Rico

Sr. Grace Buckreis

Sr. Laverne Miller

Sr. Marcus Gmeinder

Sr. Mary Hornung

Sr. Mary Ann Bogosoff

Sr. Rose André Miller

Sr. Stella Marie Karls

Sr. Virginia Adler

Sr. Vivian Kleinsorge

Sr. Wilhelmina Schoch

40 Years - 1967

Sr. Guadalupe Ortiz

Sr. Jean Steffes

Sr. Joleen Retzer

Sr. Judith Vander Grinten

Sr. Kathleen Cook

Sr. Kathleen Nelessen

Sr. Kathleen Schweihs

Sr. Marilyn Bever

Sr. Mary Menke

Sr. Mary Noel Brown

Sr. Mary Rose Obholz

Sr. Patricia Hayes

Sr. Rhea Emmer

Sr. Rita Kramer

Sr. Susan Kolb

15 Years - 1992

Sr. Thelma Barahona

In Memoriam... walking with God



Sr. Mary Frances Schug, 80, died August 6, 2006

She was born in Yonkers, NY and entered the convent in 1943, professing her vows in 1946. Her gift of music will be remembered by all.



Sr. Eymard Wirtz, 91, died September 22, 2006

She was born in Crown Point, IN and entered the convent in 1932, professing her vows in 1935. She taught elementary school for 54 years in New York, Kansas and Wisconsin and upon retirement volunteered at All About Life Nursing Home.



Sr. Marie Laque (Eustachia), 86, died October 27, 2006

She was born in Two Rivers, WI and entered the convent in 1936, professing her vows in 1939. She joyfully shared her talents of music, sewing and craftmaking.



Sr. Rose Agnes (Viola) Freund, 93, died October 27, 2006

She was born in Fond du Lac, WI and entered the convent in 1937, professing her vows in 1940. She served as a nurse and supervisor hospitals in Wisconsin and Kansas. She will be remembered for her wise mentoring of young nurses.



Sr. Mary Leon Snyder, 87, died October 30, 2006

She was born in New Haven, IN and entered the convent in 1941, professing her vows in 1944. As an educator and later ministering to elderly sisters, she believed in living each day to the fullest, giving of herself unselfishly.



Sr. Sharon McEnery, 76, died November 11, 2006

She was born in Evanston, IL and entered the convent in 1946, professing her vows in 1950. She was a teacher and librarian in Wisconsin, Illinois, New York and Arizona. She is remembered for her great love of learning, people and life.



Sr. Mary Beatrice Nolan, 91, died December 10, 2006

She was born in Fort Wayne, IN and entered the convent in 1933, professing her vows in 1936. She shared her love of education as both a teacher and librarian.



Sr. Marita Becher, 88, died January 7, 2007

She was born in Stratford, WI and entered the convent in 1932, professing her vows in 1937. She loved children, leading them to God through Catholic education.

For the full the obituary go to www.csasisters.org and click on vowed life and then obituaries and individual listing.



DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Sr. Deborah Walter

Welcome to the first issue of BLESSINGS, the biannual publication of the CSA Development Ministry. The stories chosen for this first issue were chosen particularly because they give life and purpose to why the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes has ventured into the ministry of development. By receiving this publication you are part of the on-going partnership in mission and ministry with the Sisters of St. Agnes.

Seeking your support to help fund retirement for our elderly sisters, and requesting resources to continue ministering to those in great need, is the main focus in the featured articles. We are committed to sharing with you the stories that reveal our mission and introduce you to those who live the mission. The featured stories will demonstrate how the mission of CSA is integrated in the lives of our retired sisters and those serving in ministries in Latin and North America.

We hope you will become faithful readers of this publication. We would be delighted to hear from you with any questions or concerns which you might have.

Sincerely,

Sister Deborah Walter, CSA
Director of Development
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

The Development Ministry of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes exists to broaden awareness of and gain additional resources for futhering the mission and ministries of the congregation.



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