

REFLECTIONS

&
Connections

FEBRUARY 2014

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

Associate

Relationship

The vision statement of the Associates of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes begins with “Called by the Spirit to be Associates, we are women and men who welcome a vibrant, mutual relationship with the Congregation of Sisters of Saint Agnes. United in spirit and mission, we embrace the heritage, hospitality and simplicity of the Congregation.” Ellen Swan has been the Director of Associate Relationship for the past nine years. She will be retiring in 2014 and when Associates were asked to share their thoughts about Ellen the following comments were among those received.

“Ellen has enriched and expanded CSA’s Associate Relationship during her time as director. She has helped us grow into greater independence, both as individuals and in the on-going development of Associate Relationship.”

– Mary Beth Osiecki

“Ellen is a leader who leads from the heart. I appreciated every committee I was on with Ellen; she could be counted on to deliver. She is a caring person with a sense of humor.”

– Sharon Baudry

“‘Eventually God calls us to be free as wind, blowing inscrutably where it will. Such are those who are born of the Spirit.’ For me this quote from Prayer: Living with God by Simon Tugwell, O.P., captures part of the essence of Ellen. I am grateful for her leadership and friendship.”

– Sandra Miles Putman

Thank you, Ellen!



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Sister Janet Ahler

L'Arche Ministry

L'Arche is a unique setting of four homes located in Mobile, Alabama, that welcomes in mentally and physically disabled adults. It is also home to Sister Janet Ahler, a gentle woman who has been called a “guardian angel.”

The word L'Arche is from the French language meaning “the Ark.” This is a place where mentally challenged individuals live in households where they can grow and belong. “I was looking for a job with heart and found it; L'Arche has become home to me,” said Sister Janet. “I return to Wisconsin each summer but find myself missing the L'Arche residents. We are primarily a Christian community respecting the faith traditions of all members. We accept each person as they are. My work is to listen, support, and spend time with members. It is about building relationships and valuing one another.”

A co-worker of Sister Janet shared that “when she leaves for the summer I am sad, something is missing. When she returns she brings balance, her love and spirit back to our community.”

For twelve years Sister Janet lived in a household with a L'Arche member whose mother died when he was six years old. After her death he was placed in an institution. As a young adult he came to live at L'Arche. Each day he would spend time at the Activity Center where he interacted with other members. When he returned for dinner Sister Janet would ask him about his day. He said one evening, “Janet, you are my guardian angel; you are just like my mother.”

At the core of L'Arche is the belief that “the value of a person is not intelligence but in the heart. God reveals God’s self in a particular way in people with handicaps, through their weakness and simplicity of heart.”— from *The Heart of L'Arche* by the founder Jean Vanier. To learn more about L'Arche go to www.larchemobile.org.





Paying it Forward –
Making
Connections
and Transforming
Lives

“Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire.”

— William Butler Yeats

*J*ust as the sun begins to warm the dense jungle landscape of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, twelve young women make their way along narrow roads lined by simple shacks and shops to URACCAN University, where they are studying to become physicians. Some come from impoverished rural villages; others from crime-ridden cities – but, they are all connected by the common threads of mutuality and generosity.

Recipients of Adelante Mujer (Advance Woman) scholarships, which provide assistance with tuition, books, and supplies, as well as one meal per day, these women are transforming not only their own lives,

but those of others in communities throughout Nicaragua. Initiated, administered, and funded through the work of Sister Ann McKean, CSA, the program’s requirements include graduation from high school, good grades, and passing on to others the help they have been given.

“There is a tremendous sense of companionship among the girls,” shared Sister Ann, who began the program in 2009 as an effort to encourage young girls to pursue their dreams for a higher education, a crucial factor in breaking the cycle of teenage pregnancy and poverty. “Nearly fifty percent of children in Nicaragua are born to girls under age

fifteen. This program is an incentive to choose a different path and to pay it forward. Each one of the students has shared her dream to provide medical care for the Nicaraguan people.”

Sister Ann, the recent recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from Marian University, a CSA sponsored institution located in Wisconsin, dedicated more than five decades to education from grade school to graduate level, as well as earning a master’s and a doctoral degree. Sharing her zeal for expanding horizons and education has led her to explore many different avenues including aviation and languages, but her most important legacy is empowering women.

For most young women in Nicaragua, higher education is a luxury. Those who are chosen to participate in the program navigate their own journey of success and set positive examples for other aspiring students, becoming stewards of their individual gifts and contributing to the mission of CSA. In a country with only one doctor for approximately every 4,000 people, their contributions in health care are a tribute to CSA and the value of paying it forward.

“It is a sense of connectedness that keeps it all going,” noted Sister Ann, whose ministry involves overseeing the program and raising funds for scholarships. “There have been many times when a conversation has led to a connection between someone who has the resources to help and someone who needs help.”

Transforming lives happens one connection at a time – one person reaching out to another. From the university classrooms and community hospitals in urban areas to the wooden hovels and makeshift medical clinics in remote mountain villages, the graduates of Adelante Mujer will pay it forward, carrying on the message and mission of caring for others with compassion and dignity.



Sister Ann McKean’s ministry is to help young Nicaraguan women to achieve their dream for higher education.

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Lois Karlin (Sylvia)
December 3, 2013

Sister Lois Karlin, one of fifteen children, was born and raised in Catherine, Kansas. Four of her sisters also became members of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes; one brother became a Capuchin priest in Kansas.

She taught in elementary schools and in high schools as a business teacher for 56 years. After her long ministry in education, Sister Lois did office work at The Leo House in New York City and worked at Thomas More Prep-Marian High School in Hays, Kansas, in admissions and research.



Sister Valeria Brungardt (formerly Sister Maris Stella)
October 22, 2013

Sister Valeria was from Victoria, Kansas—the oldest of eight children. She made her profession of vows in August of 1949. She served in a variety of ministries in her 64 years of vowed life. These included x-ray technician and laboratory aide. She ministered in pastoral care in Kansas and in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. She also ministered at Holy Family Orphanage in Marquette, Michigan, caring for girls from ages three to eight.



Sister Martin de Porres Orford (Mary Theresa)
October 17, 2013

Sister Martin de Porres was born in Chicago, Illinois, and made her profession of vows in August 1940. She was an elementary teacher for 31 years teaching in Wisconsin, Indiana, New York, and Illinois. For nine years she ministered in Mobile, Alabama, Rosemount, Minnesota, and Hays, Kansas, doing parish ministry and pastoral care. She also did prison ministry which included writing to prisoners.

For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org. Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.

“The
Lord
is my
light

and my salvation;
whom should
I fear?



The Lord is my life's
refuge; of whom
should I be afraid?"

– Psalm 27:1

*W*hat is it that makes me feel safe, confident and unafraid? The theme of “security” has reverberated in my mind and heart since participating in the School of the Americas (SOA) Watch Vigil November 22-24 with Sister Caryl Hartjes, CSA, Sister Mary Rose Meis, CSA, and Sister Stella Storch, OP. During our trip to Fort Benning, GA, where the School of the Americas is located, we experienced airport security procedures that have become normative in our post 9-11 world. Throughout the terminal, public address announcements regularly reminded us to keep watch over our baggage at all times and not to accept anything from another person. On Sunday morning as we marched in solemn procession before the main gate of Fort Benning,

hundreds of US Army and local law enforcement personnel surveyed the nonviolent crowd while a helicopter hovered above us to secure the base's perimeter.

For me, this amount of government surveillance was both unusual and unexpected. In my daily affairs here in Fond du Lac I experience no fear and therefore pay little attention to personal safety. I anticipated having similar feelings during the weekend vigil in Columbus, GA. Indeed, I did feel secure among the throngs of people from across North and South America who attended this 23rd annual vigil. Thousands of us participated in workshops, viewed socio dramas and films, sang songs, and prayed together. We pledged nonviolence and lived it to the full. So why, I asked myself, did our government find it necessary to observe us so closely with armed guards, security cameras, and helicopters?

The experience at Fort Benning has increased my feelings of solidarity with many of our sisters and brothers from Latin America who have had every reason to fear actions by some of their governments' military and paramilitary forces who were trained in counter insurgency tactics at the School of the Americas. Since the School was first



Sisters Mary Rose Meis, Sally Ann Brickner, Caryl Hartjes, and Stella Storch at a fence where the crosses were placed.

established in Panama in 1946, thousands of civilians have been tortured, disappeared, or murdered by death squads. In many of the workshops I attended, survivors told stories that helped me to understand their fear and to feel shame that my government has been involved by sponsoring the School of the Americas.

During the solemn procession to the main gate of Fort Benning on Sunday morning, we cried out: “No más! No more!” Lifting our white crosses with the names of victims written on them we sang “Presente!” and remembered in our hearts each one named: “You are here with us. You are not forgotten.” My prayer that morning was to let go of fear and to place my trust in God alone. My commitment was to return to Fort Benning each year until the School of the Americas is closed. I pledged to continue to be in solidarity with our Latin American brothers and sisters so that they need not fear for their personal security, that of their families, and for their property. For their security is bound up with mine.



Servant freed!

I stand in the darkened fissure of the stable, lit only by the glowing face of the boy-child. Parent eyes glistening with holy wonder, while heavened stars point to mangeder Messiah. I listen, I wonder, I breathe, for I am only servant.

I stand in the darkened temple portico observing those of the Law encircling the teacher-child. His face radiates with purpose and passion about God’s *call!* I listen, I wonder, I breathe, for I am only servant.

I stand in the Cana garden among the six stoneware water jars. His mother moving his mission, “Do whatever he tells you.” Waters of purification touched with words of transformation become intoxicating wedding wine. Speak these words over me... fill me to the brim with courage as I listen, as I wonder, as I breathe, for I am only servant.

I stand along the steep grassy edges of the partial rocky hillside, His face emits energy with each spoken, “Blessed are you!” I listen, I wonder, I breathe, for I am only servant.

I stand in the upper room, corner-concealed, yet his eyes beckon me to move within his touch. His carpentered hands accept each foot as with the artistry of fitting rough hewn wood. With tender, soothing, healing – intimate knowing, he bends to wash my feet.

Upon this embrace – God-light, God-love streams into my very soul – I listen and hear within me:

Untie her. What do you want me to do for you? Pick up your mat. I do not condemn you. You are worth more than many sparrows. You are no longer servant—you are friend.

I wonder, I breathe . . .

Jean Hinderer, CSA



CSA

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Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

<http://www.csasisters.org/>

What's Happening at the UN:

<http://whatshappeningattheun.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(in the front page of our web site)

Vocation E-Newsletter

(in the front page of our web site)



<http://www.facebook.com/sasisters?sk=wall>

(in the front page of our web site)



[http://www.youtube.com/user/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1)

TheCSAChannel1

(in the front page of our web site)

Sister Johana *Champion for Women's Health in Nicaragua*

Managua, capital of Nicaragua, has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the country with a quarter of all pregnancies occurring to girls under 18. Sister Johana Granado Rosales is committed to changing this statistic. "I work as a nurse in an ER. I witness the effects of young girls, sometimes as young as 12 or 13, delivering an infant. These births can be very difficult and sometimes the mother and infant die. The rate of death is very high among this population," shared Sister Johana. "I recently completed my Masters in Public Health; my thesis was focused on the high rate of pregnancy among teens. A key factor is the the lack of basic health education particularly in regard to the reproductive system. Women's healthcare issues need to be brought out in the open and the lack of information is truly appalling."

"My prayer is to work directly with young girls as a healthcare educator and mentor," said Sister Johana.

