REFLECTIONS Connections

MAY 2019

Let PEACE Spring from the Heart of Earth and within the Hearts of All People

Doris Klein, CS

STORIES OF MISSION & MINISTRY



Dear Friends,



The days of May are upon us and new life is springing up all around in the upper Midwest. In Wisconsin we are enjoying the rushing waters in the streams and rivers; the violets, tulips, lilies of the valley give delight; and the chirping of the birds gives us the hope by which we recognize God's creative power in our midst. No matter how formidable the winter past, beauty arrives with the spring thaw. The cycles of nature call us to match the rhythm of nature with the rhythms of our own lives. This is a season that beckons us to blossom forth and begin again – or continue with – our own commitments in our work, in our relationships and in our re-creation.

Words from our CSA Constitutions come to mind: "We consider our formation a lifelong process of individual growth in identification with Jesus Christ, and we help one another to be open to this process in all the circumstances of our lives."(57) The cycles of nature provide us with big and bold reminders of the underlying rhythm of the universe – the times for planting, for growing, for reaping and for regenerating. These cycles play out in our lives, sometimes matching the patterns of nature and other times catching us off-guard, so inviting us to help one another get synchronized with a reality filled with mystery and grace, larger than our ordinary ability to comprehend. Nature grounds us with its patterns and cycles, and the call of our Creator has the power to take us beyond our comfort zones as we respond to the signs and needs of the times around us "in all the circumstances of our lives."

Approaching each day with hope and expectation can allow us to see a larger reality and meaning that is only possible when we acknowledge the presence of Holy Mystery in our lives – often in the most unexpected circumstances. "It is the things that you cannot do anything about and the things you cannot do anything with that do something to you." (Richard Rohr) Paradox abounds, confounds and refounds in the very dailiness of our lives!

In the peace and love of Christ,

Sister Jean Steffes, CSA General Superior





Editorial Board Members: Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry, Sister Susan Treis, Sister Cyndi Nienhaus, Dusty Krikau, and Suzanne Flood.

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ON THE COVER: "Let Peace Spring Forth with Words" by Sister Doris Klein, CSA

Building Dreams into

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BY CAROL BRAUN

or CSA associate Esther Hicks, a dream began twelve years ago when she accepted an invitation to become an education consultant to Bishop Godfrey Onah in Nsukka, Nigeria, for developing Catholic schools in his diocese. Esther traveled alone, the first white missionary in forty years to visit Nsukka. After assessing the needs there, Esther returned to Chicago where she gathered a group of people to assist her in addressing the complex challenges she discovered: no water, no electricity, little leadership training, and a need in planning for development and actual construction of educational buildings.

The dream of the Nigerian diocese continued as principals, teachers, priests and others from the United States visited Nsukka to support the vision and to participate in leadership development, education conferences and healthcare seminars. By 2017, through the partnership of the Diocese of Nsukka and the Archdiocese of Chicago, a Catholic school, featuring a fresh water well, lighting, toilets, and teachers trained in 21st century education, was built and opened. Esther said, "I have made several trips a year to Nsukka. Each time I visit I see a difference in the faces and smiles of the people. Knowing they have a future brings hope."

Esther is also involved in continuing the efforts of a dream begun ten years ago by Sister Ann McKean, CSA, the foundress of *Adelante Mujer (Advance Woman)*. Supported by an executive directress, Sister Diane Bauknecht and a board of directors, *Adelante Mujer* offers financial assistance



to women studying to become medical doctors in Nicaragua. Esther and associates Mary Gorske and Joan Schilke, as well as four additional community members on the board oversee the program for professional preparation of women to practice medicine in one of the poorest areas of the Western Hemisphere where there is only one doctor per 9,000 persons.

Through these partnerships people are assisted in finding a path to a better life, not just for themselves but for future generations. "It has been a remarkable faith journey collaborating with so many good people in building dreams into reality," said Esther.

Further Reading: *Adelante Mujer* celebrates 10 years in 2019. Read more about this amazing program by visiting *www.womanadvance.com*



Esther with inaugural class of students with their principal and teachers at St. Benedict the African College, Junior Secondary level, in Nsukka.

Esther (left) with medical students and Sister Diane Bauknecht (third from right) in Nicaragua.

L to R: Sisters Clare Lawlor, Julie Ann Krahl, Ms. Jeanne Kowalski, and Sister Patricia Weidman

When Human Dignity is

Threatened

BY SISTERS JULIE ANN KRAHL, CLARE LAWLOR, AND PATRICIA WEIDMAN, CSA

Catholic

RGV.

Charities

HUMANITARIAN RESPITE CENTER Restoring Human Dignity

n the closing months of 2018 the Leadership Conference of Women Religious articulated to its members the need for more volunteers at the McAllen, Texas, Humanitarian Respite Center sponsored by Catholic Charities. Three members of the Sisters of St. Agnes, Patricia, Julie, and Clare, accepted the call and journeyed to Texas with Ms. Jeanne Kowalski. The following is a brief insight into the reality of refugees and the volunteers who assisted them.

Daily, in buses accompanied by border security, 250 - 450 Central American and Mexican refugees arrived in McAllen, Texas, from the border and detention centers. The Respite Center reaches out to these asylum seekers with meals, clothes, showers, sleeping rooms, large relaxing spaces, toys for the children and secures arrangements to connect these people with their US families and sponsors. Within 24 hours, refugees board Center vans going to local, commercial bus stations. Many have tickets to faraway northern cities. They get tote bags to carry their personal items, a blanket and sandwiches. As the refugees head to the vans, they hold their single tote, carry information envelopes, and wear new coats. Toddlers have one hand in dad's, the other hugs their stuffed *oso de peluche* (teddy bear). The Center wants to give them enough to reach their sponsors.

On any given day Sister Patricia translates the US currency to a group in a hallway. Sister Clare enthusiastically welcomes arrivals, guiding them into the building. Jeanne, managing the *ropa para mujerers* (women's clothing) room, helps women select pants and shirts. In the donation room, Sister Julie selects usable clothing: petite for their small bodies, practical, modest, and without violent images. The next hour Sister Patricia hands each person shoelaces to replace those removed at the border. Sister Clare carries coats to the warm-clothing distribution room. Jeanne, in a pantry, assembles rows of cheese and bologna sandwiches. Sister Julie pours water for children. Occasionally, all are together in the kitchen: finding bowls in storage, ladling soup, handing out warm tortillas, and distributing guava juice.

Enriched by Those We Serve

Daily, the four of us gather in the yard to sit, reflecting on the diverse blessings of those who have crossed the border. We embrace their gratitude for being here. This Center is small, crowded, chaotic, but this chaos is holy. We reflect on our lives of plenty and pray that they have enough: enough food, clothes, personal supplies, welcome, comfort, courage, safety, prayers, smiles, hope...

At noon on the fourth day, we see "the wall" and see Mexico. We whisper... we touch... we behold Mexico... We realize the holiness of this land, the holiness of people reaching out to each other, and the painfulness of lands arbitrarily divided. We return to the Center and to welcoming refugees.

The time comes when we must leave. Our hearts say, "Stay, this is a much-needed ministry." We stood among 3,000 asylum seekers during our two-week ministry. The four of us and the refugees have exchanged much!

¡VAYA CON DIOS! Go with God!

Further Reading: Several sisters have answered the call to assist at the border, including Sister Eileen Mahony in Tucson, Arizona, and Sister Patricia Hayes in El Paso, Texas. Their stories, pictures, and additional reflections from the McAllen trip can be found in the news and events section at *www.csasisters.org*



A bus carrying asylum seekers from the border arrives at the Respite Center.

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Mary Hornung, CSA January 25, 2019

Sister Mary Hornung, CSA, baptized Marilyn Hornung, was born in Sauk City, Wisconsin, on March 13, 1934, to Edgar Hornung and Verna Guethlein Hornung. Marilyn entered St.

Agnes Convent in 1953 and attended St. Agnes High School, receiving a diploma in 1955. Sister Mary made her profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15, 1957. Sister Mary ministered in elementary and religious education in Wisconsin and Ohio until she retired in 2004, at which point she served in pastoral ministry at St. Andrew parish in Verona, Wisconsin.

Sister Mary was preceded in death by her parents Edgar and Verna Hornung. Sister Mary is survived by cousins, friends and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed and ministered.



Sister Gonzaga Hron, CSA March 20, 2019

Sister Gonzaga Hron, baptized Louise Hron, was born in West Bend, Wisconsin, on June 7, 1945. She was the second of a family of five children. In 1965 she entered St. Agnes Convent

and made her first profession in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on August 15,1968, with the religious name Sister Gonzaga. Sister Gonzaga taught for 10 years at St. Mary. Springs High School, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin; Beloit Catholic High School, Beloit, Wisconsin; and Immaculate Conception High School, Elmhurst, Illinois. In addition, Sister Gonzaga ministered for many years in dietary services. Sister Gonzaga also had a deep love of the earth and was most creative in caring for the wetlands near St. Agnes Convent.

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

Harmony 2019: One Perspective from

Aried Sources

Staff of the Leadership Collaborative (L to R): Sisters Rita Waters, RSM; Vicki Wuolle, CSA; Charlene Diorka, SSJ; and Ms. Krista Clements Orlan

BY SISTER VICKI WUOLLE

n early January people from across the globe gathered at *Christ (deemed to be University)* in Bangalore, India, for Harmony 2019. The purpose of the conference was to explore the concept of harmony through the "Interface of Cosmic, Ethical and Religious Orders." I had the opportunity to attend the conference and present a paper along with over 100 scholars across a variety of disciplines. The paper I presented, "The Impetus of God's Love: An Approach of Possibility," discussed the work of the Leadership Collaborative (thelc.global.com) in the engagement of practices that situate discernment at the heart of preparing women religious and their associates for emergent leadership.

My hope in attending the conference was to witness the many ways people are experiencing the unitive dimensions of "Conscious Evolution" throughout academia, business, science and faith. The question I carried through the event was, "How do people from diverse backgrounds of faith and social/cultural realities identify unity and/or community during this time of great change?"

Rony Joy, biologist and teacher from St. Paul Secondary School, Mhadya Pradesh, India, shared how harmony within the cells has a vibrational quality that scientists refer to as singing, and further she explained how this has an ultimate impact on the biosphere (living layer of earth). In her address, she used science to argue that the dissonant variations created toward disharmony can be resolved through practices that promote cellular harmony within lifeforms. She argued that cancer cells become life threatening, but that people can change the physical environment through meditation, science and various healing practices to bring the cells back into harmony. Rony Joy highlighted that by using science and spiritual practices an individual holds the capacity to heal the world when she changes the environment that exists within herself.

The second presenter, Dr. Antoon Geels, Professor Emeritus, Psychology of Religions, Lund University, Sweden, used the arts and spiritual dialogue as the foundation of his paper. He looked to the arts to help foster the evolving consciousness needed to promote the fullness of dialogue that addresses universal spirituality in the world's religions. Dr. Geels addressed the state of consciousness among humans as the way to further the spiritual evolution that is needed to integrate toward harmony, so that creation may both survive and thrive. At the heart of his universal cosmology is the phenomena of existence, becoming more fully alive. Humanity has the capacity to foster such growth or circumvent progress, through regressive and violent acts that lead toward dissolution and destruction.

Harmony 2019 was an experience that helped me see more wholly how women religious and our associates are contributing to harmony throughout the world as we continue to grow in contemplative practices that move us toward greater understanding, collective wisdom, and action that supports the emerging systems of our time in the early 21st Century.

Further Reading: Sister Vicki Wuolle is the Executive Director for The Leadership Collaborative. Read more about how this group is building future women religious leaders at *thelc.global* See, Judge, and

ENCOUNTER

BY SISTER RUTH BATTAGLIA, CSA

ho are the people excluded from our economy? Who does our immigration system and our criminal justice system leave behind? How does racism leave a vast number of people on the outside? These are the questions that "Year of Encounter" addresses from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. The hoped-for outcome of the program is the creation of a public encounter, in the manner of Pope Francis: standing together against exclusion and calling for changes in the systems that treat some people as less worthy.

The Year of Encounter (YOE) with Pope Francis, was a sixweek program based on the "see, judge, act" model of social justice. It was designed to draw participants to a deeper understanding of the life situations of those excluded from mainstream society. Because we may not often have an opportunity to relate with people of other races, those in deep poverty, those in prison or immigrants, we tend to misunderstand and even fear them.

A profound teaching of Jesus Christ is that no one is excluded from God's love and care. This is the message of Pope Francis who is encountering and embracing prisoners, refugees, the infirm, the young and the old those who are vulnerable and often left in the margins. According to Michael Sean Winters, in a blog in *National Catholic Reporter* dated August 19, 2013, "(T)he capacity to encounter is about the Christian's stance towards the world and especially towards other persons, the ability, achieved through grace, to stand towards the world as Christ stood towards the world." For Jesus and for Pope Francis, no one is excluded.

YEAR of ENCOUNTER

Many of those who attended YOE in Fond du Lac stated that they participated because their faith compels them to act. They have special concern for people without a safety net, the people for whom a car repair payment or a medical bill could snowball into defaulting on rent, an eviction, and loss of possessions, pushing them further to the margin. Young people who emerge from foster care are vulnerable to this kind of situation. A crisis arises and there is no family to go home to or to help them out. Everything they worked hard for begins to unravel. Many people living on the edge of poverty can easily slip into similar circumstances. YOE challenged participants to be intentional about meeting, listening to, and walking with people in situations like this who otherwise might have been ignored or considered a burden to society.

The YOE sessions were facilitated by retired priest Carl Diederichs, two lay people, and Sister Ruth Battaglia, CSA.

Further Reading: Find opportunities to "See, Judge, and Act" by following Sister Ruth on Twitter **@RuthBattaglia5**



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Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site: www.csasisters.org

Adelante Mujer/Advance Woman www.womanadvance.com

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation justicepeacecsa.blogspot.com

Streams 'N Stirrings csavocations.blogspot.com

You

www.facebook.com/csasisters www.facebook.com/AssociatesofCSA

www.youtube.com/TheCSAChannel1

Update your contact information by emailing us at csaadm@csasisters.org or calling 920-907-2300.

From the Archives

BY JENNIFER LUKOMSKI

Ithough a Justice and Peace office for the Sisters of St. Agnes was not formally established until 1990, the congregation's concern for human dignity and care of the earth has always been present. It was during the renewal chapter of 1969 that sisters from Nicaragua shared with the community a new understanding and enthusiasm for global social justice. After this meeting CSA gradually began to develop a peace and justice agenda.

- Beginning in 1973, a member of the general council was designated to raise awareness and encourage sisters' involvement in social justice issues. Sister Anne Jude Van Lanen held Social Awareness Workshops encouraging sisters to read and discuss current theological literature. At the 1981 chapter, the congregation committed to respond to the "cry of the poor" through direct service and advocacy.
- By the mid-1980s, the congregation joined organizations like *Pax Christi* to keep members apprised of issues through the general council's quarterly communication, *CSA Update*. A process for taking corporate stances on social and economic issues was developed.



The declaration of CSA grounds as a nuclear-free zone in 1989.



A peace march at the motherhouse in 2002.



A rally in downtown Fond du Lac in February of 2017 showing support of inclusive immigration policies.

- In 1990, the Justice/Peace/Ecology Committee (JPEC) was created to carry out the justice and peace agenda of the congregation by sponsoring peace events and encouraging sisters to participate in activities in their local communities.
- Under its first full-time coordinator, Sister Nieves de la Rosa, JPEC widened its scope and became involved in shareholder activism and town hall meetings with legislators. In 2000, JPEC committed to focus on women's issues, children, healthcare, and the death penalty, all through the lens of non-violence.
- The committee, which evolved into the office of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) in 2015, continues to work at the local, national, and international levels to advocate for more just environmental, social, economic, and political systems.