

## Cluny Associates Celebrate 15th Anniversary



Terry Wallace

*My participation as a Cluny Associate has been a genuine gift, giving new meaning to my personal experience of belonging within the Body of Christ, nurturing my spiritual life and providing me spiritual refreshment for the journey. Terry Wallace, Hamilton, Ontario*

**T**o all our Cluny Associates we wish a blessed anniversary, particularly the first members of the West Virginia group, which has continued to grow in numbers over the years. For those of us who have accompanied our groups – Sisters Marie and Regina in West Virginia, Sister Maria Rocha and Sister Regina in Hamilton, Sister Gisele in Newport and Sister Mary Patrice in California, it has been and continues to be an enriching sharing of our Cluny charism and spirituality. You have drawn from the sources of the life and writings of Blessed Anne-Marie, journeying together and challenging one another and us. The witness of your lives shines out to those around you, and we are filled with gratitude for the blessing of your desire to partner with us on the Way with Christ.

Associates, laypersons who wish to share our spirituality and sometimes also collaborate with us in ministry, are accompanied by a Cluny Sister. In the initial stages, an associates' group engages in becoming more familiar with the spirit and spirituality of the congregation. Meetings involve a time of prayer, reflection, sharing and a decision – whether personal or communal – to live out what has been discussed. This association also brings about a closer connection with the congregation-at-large, yet it remains a distinct, parallel organization. With time, the sister appointed to accompany associates becomes more of a mentor than an organizer, encouraging the members to develop their own leadership and structures according to the guidelines for associates.

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# In Memoriam - Cluny Affiliates

Sister Mary Patrice Watson

Jim Walsh

Margaret Plummer

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Thank you.

Jim Walsh was a man of strength, commitment and deep faith whose life blessed many people in St. Catherine Laboure Parish, Torrance, CA and beyond. Along with Kay, his adored wife of 53 years, he donated many years of his time and spirit to the parish, while he became close friends with many of the priests who served there. Perhaps it was his Irish heritage that turned his blood green because everyone knew he never missed a Holy Name Society's communion breakfast when the *Fighting Irish* were in town to play USC! Jim also had a unique bond with us Cluny Sisters. He would take care of the convent grounds, then come inside for a cup of coffee and some good story telling. Above all else, Jim's family meant all the world to him - Kay and his 5 children and his 6 grandchildren.

Of course, there were some facets of Jim's life about which he was especially proud. One was the fact that he was a Navy man during WW II and served on a tank landing ship in the Asian Pacific Theater. Another was his prowess as an amateur boxer and the fact that he trained professionals for 20 years. Yet another was Jim's 32 years of commitment and hard work at Standard Oil in El Segundo.

All through his life Jim inspired others through his commitment, faith, empathy, and generosity. He never took anything or anyone for granted, including God. On April 21st, he won the last round. He is rejoicing now with God, just waiting for us to join him.

Margaret "Peg" Plummer was a woman who lived for others...her family, friends and St. Catherine Laboure parish, Torrance, CA. After she recovered from her near fatal heart attack in 2001, each day was very precious to her and us. However, she did nothing different. She still reached out just as she always had...To Larry, her husband of 55 years, her two children and three grandchildren, of whom she was so very proud. ...To her friends from St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, where she was head of pediatric nursing. ...To all the priests (past and present) at St. Catherine Laboure rectory where she capably ministered, first as secretary, then as parish administrator for over 40 years. (As well as being one of the first parish administrator graduates from Loyola Marymount University, she also received the 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Award' from Pope John Paul II.) ...To the parishioners of St. Catherine Laboure parish, especially those with whom she helped to get the Parish School of Religion and other new projects off the ground. She was ready for new challenges and was not put off by other peoples' hesitations or negativity. In many ways, she was a woman ahead of her time. ...To Sister Michelle and her beloved homeless and poor of the House of Yahweh. Peg associated with them for 25 years and volunteered her services right up to two weeks before she died. ...To us Cluny Sisters, for whom she managed to procure so many 'blessings' and with whom she so often rejoiced in faith. Peg and Larry were honored as Affiliates of our Congregation in 2002. We all miss her, and look forward to a wonderful reunion with her in eternal Life.

## Cluny Associates in the Province

| <i>Founded</i> |                                   | <i>Members<br/>in 2008</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1993           | West Virginia                     | 14                         |
| 1998           | Hamilton -<br>Portuguese-Canadian | 19                         |
| 2000           | Rhode Island                      | 2                          |
| 2005           | Hamilton - Canadian               | 10                         |
| 2007           | California                        | 8                          |

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# Anne-Marie Javouhey and the Holy Will of God A Spirituality for our Time

Sister Regina Brunelle

## Living in Tune with all God's Creation

“**T**he deepest cause of the present devastation is found in a mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the humans.” So wrote Thomas Berry in 1999. For him, our alienation from the earth is what has led to our human audacity in exploiting all other communities in the universe to our own ends. But the prophetic voices of people like Berry are finally awakening us to the need for a new approach to Mother Earth. Some ten years later, the greening of our planet is no longer considered just an “in” trend but rather an absolute must for our survival. Humans are not above all other earth communities. We are one with them, sharing in the life systems that keep us all alive. The God who created us, created us to live in sustainable harmony with one another.

The young farm girl who founded the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny at the beginning of the 19th century understood this well. She was born into a love of the earth. Having grown up in the rich farm country of Burgundy, the land was sacred to her. Respect for the earth taught her respect for the human person and she came to see them as inseparable. She understood that violating the one makes it easy to violate the other. How often we have witnessed

the truth of this in our own day!

This is why Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhey was so convinced that the best way to rehabilitate slaves was to put them back into a healthy contact with the earth that they had once revered as a mother in their native lands. As they worked the soil, developing again a relationship with the source of their being and sustenance, healing came to these wounded and battered human beings. Anne-Marie's enterprise

land even around the Mother House in the middle of Paris. Here the sisters raised vegetables for the table and beautiful flowers for the sanctuary. These gardens exist to this day.

But the bounty the earth provides was not its only attraction for Anne-Marie. When she was denied the sacraments for a period of two years, her temple became the forest. Here she celebrated 'Eucharist', communing with the God who came to her

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*Rootedness in the earth is part of the spirituality  
Blessed Anne-Marie bequeathed to us.*

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in Mana was so hugely successful because she understood that for these desecrated and abused men and women the best path to healing was exposure to the rhythm of preparing the soil, planting the seed and reaping the harvest. Gradually, as they re-entered into this rhythm they once had understood, they rediscovered their true place in the universe and the God who created all things. Over time, they were renewed, re-humanized, reborn, becoming the foundation of a healthy society that continues to this day.

Rootedness in the earth is part of the spirituality Blessed Anne-Marie bequeathed to us. Visits to our “sources” reveal buildings set on land that can be planted. It was important to her that there be arable

in the silent forests of Mana and although she was always loathe to speak of her experience of God, she did allude once or twice to the wonders of God revealed to her there.

Were she alive today, she would be proclaiming the oneness of all creation from the rooftops! She would see our drifting away from intimacy with the earth to be the source of modern-day violence. She would urge us to turn again to nature to heal that ruptured relationship created by our consumerist society and its belief that all of creation is for human benefit alone. And having led us back to living in respectful harmony with the earth and one another, she would lead us to a renewed relationship with the Creator, the Source of all being, Mother and Father of us all!

# Cluny and the Environment

Sister Anne Marie Liston

Several years ago, when Sister Pius and I were still in West Virginia, we had a couple in our parish who lived at the head of a long “holler” which had once been the opening to a coal mine. The head of the ‘hollers,’ or hollows as we might call them, are to the people of the coal fields what ‘cul de sacs’ are for those of us who grew up in more populated areas. In springtime, Sr. Pius and I enjoyed visiting this couple because of the natural beauty of the walk ‘up the holler’. It was particularly pleasant in May when there were swarms of small blue butterflies covering nearly every inch of the terrain. Just recently hatched, they were a brilliant bright blue, sometimes with black or indigo markings. They liked to cool themselves in the damp mud patches that led up the roadway. West Virginia had a variety of butterflies and they added much to the beauty of the mountains, tiny symbols of life and untouched nature in the midst of so much man-made destruction of nature and wild life. There aren’t many butterflies around anywhere these days unless one goes to a butterfly museum or nature park.

A recent edition of Audubon Magazine devoted itself entirely to the study of these delicate creatures. Their findings show that the butterfly population is rapidly diminishing and certain species have already been earmarked as endangered. Whether it is the tiny butterfly or the polar bear on its vanishing ice float we have gotten so used to hearing about the dangers of global warming, greenhouse gases, etc. that we often hardly register what we have heard. And the problem seems so vast and uncontrollable

that one is almost tempted to close one’s ears or seek other distractions because of the immensity of the question. “What can one person do in the face of all this? What can one Cluny do in the face of all these overwhelming questions about the world we inhabit, the world to which we say we are called to be signs of hope and compassion?” When in doubt, a Cluny Sister prays a lot, seeking the Will of God in the events of her daily life and the way God leads her. From big things to little things, God’s Will is all that truly matters. That is what we learn from the life of our Founder. Anne-Marie Javouhey wasn’t faced with exactly the same problems. She didn’t write many letters talking about the ecological problems of her day. But she did encourage the former slaves to use responsible methods of agriculture that would enrich the soil and help them feed their children. She did encourage her sisters to learn about the native trees and plants for their medicinal and therapeutic value. How many times do we recall her saying, “Oh, how I love Africa?” She saw the beauty of all ‘lands’ and rejoiced in their possibilities of life and growth. Surely those dark days when she made the trees of the Mana forest her chapel, because she was not welcome in the parish church, were also times when she saw the grandeur of God in God’s creation. We recall the ginkgo tree and what a symbol it is for us as it was for her so many years ago, and we are reminded of the enduring love and care of our God. In our Cluny environment we might not be able to write books, or

make great speeches or effect sweeping environmental changes, but as the saying goes, “For evil to triumph it is enough for good (people) to do nothing.” We are good people. We cannot just do ‘nothing’. So let us remember all those starfish stranded on the beach, and the point of making a difference for just one of them at a time. One starfish, one butterfly, one polar bear at a time, let us do what we can do....because We Can Do It.

For more information, see:

## Websites

General gardening tips: <http://www.organic-gardening.net/>  
Vegetable gardening: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/BODY-VH019>

Pest control: <http://www.spcpweb.org/video/?id=1>

Global Warming – understanding the issues: <http://www.eoearth.org>

## Downloads

*Earth at Risk* and related topics (in English, French and Spanish) <http://www.holycrossjustice.org/Publications/publications.htm>

## Books

Barbara Segall, *Organic Kitchen Gardening: A Guide to Growing Produce in Small Urban Areas* 96 pages, ISBN:1843303264

Barbara W. Ellis, Ed., *The Organic Gardener’s Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control*, 534 pages, ISBN:0875967531



# Cluny Oasis in Calcutta

## Lavinia House for Girls

Sister Mary Patrice Watson

Imagine you are in a slightly old taxi, making your way through central Calcutta. There is movement and noise all around you. Your guide says, "There's Lavinia House just up ahead," but you can't really distinguish it from the mass of structures that pass before you. Then, as if by magic, a gate opens and a different world appears before you. There are smiling Cluny Sisters surrounded by about 150 girls between the ages of 12 and 22. The buildings are clean and tidy. Everywhere you look there is green...from trees and other plant life. Lavinia House is very welcoming.

Before the Sisters took over around 1963, Lavinia House wasn't such a 'paradise'. It had more or less been unoccupied for several years, so you can imagine the work that was required right from the start. The Sisters began by changing its name from 'Fendall Home for

Unwed Mothers' to 'Lavinia House' -giving this home a new identity and mission and opening its gate to everyone God willed to send them.

Lavinia House began with a few small at-risk girls from the slums who needed help and protection

Centre. When a girl is admitted, she is placed according to her ability, not her age. Then she advances through the classes until she reaches Class 10 when she is ready for the National School Exam. If she passes she receives a much-coveted

diploma. After Class 10, most girls continue in the Women's Commercial Training Centre to qualify for jobs as secretaries, receptionists, bank clerks and general administrative positions. Some girls then go on for higher studies, teachers' training or Montessori training. The girls live a simple life style in a home environment, enjoying time for recreation and relaxation. Everyone



**It's a girl's world at Lavinia House!**

Photo: Ronald Marasco

helps with the household chores,

so the girls learn cooking, needle-work and housekeeping skills. They also participate in an array of artistic endeavors such as acting, music and dance, primarily the beautiful Hindi and Bengali dances.

The Cluny Sisters at Lavinia House offer their girls a well-rounded education, with general studies and the Women's Commercial Training

as boarders. Today it is bursting at the seams with teenaged girls who are at risk because they can't attend regular schools for various reasons. Nevertheless, they still share a common goal with other students and that is to succeed in life.

The Cluny Sisters at Lavinia House offer their girls a well-rounded education, with general studies and the Women's Commercial Training

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## Cluny Around the World

### Cluny Oasis in Calcutta (Con't)

30 children for a few hours each afternoon and teaches basic reading and social skills.

Without a doubt, Lavinia House is a good place to be – a welcome garden of paradise inside the gate. It is thanks to benefactors like our very good friends and Cluny Affiliates, Percy and the late Ivy Mitchell, Ernest and Mary Mitchell, and Ron and Barbara Marasco and their family that Lavinia House so successfully influences children's lives. Only God can count all the miles and all the smiles they have earned during the past 45 years or so! May Lavinia House continue to be a place where youth at risk find the gate open and someone to care for and help them.



Photo: Ronald Marasco

**Lavinia House computer class with Sister Germaine**

Please remember the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in your will. Thank you.