

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny  
Province of USA & Canada

## Connections

### Cluny Sisters Living Today Where It All Began



Photo: Sister Agnès Thévénin

Entrance to the community: Sister Chantal standing by the little house that was the first “convent” built by dad Baltasar, where the Javouhey sisters, Anne Marie, Marie Thérèse, Marie Joseph and Rosalie began.

*Sister Chantal Bescond, community leader and novice director in Chamblanc, Côte d’Or, France, recently joined Cluny Connections for an interview. She tells of the experience of this unique community, situated in the original Javouhey home where Blessed Anne Marie grew up and began her ministry.*

**Cluny Connections:** Sister Chantal, being a community of life and ministry and being the novitiate for France must be a singular experience. Tell us a little about the ministry of the community.

**Sister Chantal:** Our community has a two-fold ministry. On the one hand, we are all involved in the novitiate. That means welcoming the novices into our lives and living as sisters together. We

are called to witness for them what it means to be a Cluny Sister. For me it means accompanying them through the actual formation process. On the other hand, each sister is involved in local outreach and in welcoming the many people who come on pilgrimage.

**CC:** To be a novice in Chamblanc must be very special. What is the life of a novice like?

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## From the Editor's Desk



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**A**s we move into the new year,  
we wish you all the peace which fills  
those hearts open to the graces of  
the season. May it linger throughout  
the year!

This issue focuses on the Cluny  
charism as it is being lived today.  
The charism lives strong and  
viable from its birthplace in  
Chamblanc, France to far-flung  
India where Blessed AMJ's concern  
for justice and the poor lives in  
the ministry of our Sisters there.

We see the charism flourishing in  
our Associates who gathered in  
Hamilton in October. We celebrate  
it as we mark the first 75th jubilee in  
our Province and add two more 60th  
anniversaries and are grateful for  
the faithful living of it by Kay Walsh,  
our affiliate. We hope that this issue  
will give you all a little more insight  
into what it means to live the Cluny  
Charism!

Sister Regina Brunelle

### Where it all began:

The Javouhey home  
and Cluny Convent/  
Novitiate  
in Chamblanc.



Photo: Sr. Marie Cooper



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## Where It All Began (Continued)

**SC:** It is a time of prayer and formation. I meet with them for class on a regular basis and we participate in an inter-congregation formation program with novices from other congregations once a month in Paris. The instructors provide excellent theological input, and the novices are able to connect with their peers. But it was a prophetic move to situate the novitiate here. Our location lends itself to discover Anne Marie and our charism, to learn it by heart in the changing of the seasons and to be in communion with the past and present in preparation for the future. The spiritual experience is powerful. Each novice is also asked to reflect on what her outreach in the local community might be. Sister Agnès Marie worked a half-day a week with the Red Cross; Sister Marie-Bruno sauntered down to the bus stop to meet the children going to school and thus got to know the mothers and their needs. At the end of the school year, the children put on a little play about the life of Blessed Anne Marie.

Although this outreach was limited, the novices sowed seeds of friendship and faith. As a result, the townspeople “adopted” them, and called on them for testimonials. When Sister Agnès-Marie returned from her community experience in Haiti, the diocese featured her in the news, and then reported on her vow ceremony with a story and photos on the website and the local newspaper published articles and photos. The people from the area assisted with preparations for the vows ceremony in October. Our invitation to those who had helped to a thank you dinner at the convent created a great buzz around the village: “We’ve been invited into the convent!”

**CC:** And then for the “other side” of the community’s ministry: what is your focus?

**SC:** We have a co-ed secondary school also. None of us work full time in the



*Here lived Anne-Marie JAVOUHEY, liberator of the slaves in Guiana  
Sign at the entrance of the village of Chamblanc.*

Photo: Sister Marie Cooper

school, but we are often called upon for something specific. It is a way of keeping the charism alive in the school. Recently we welcomed one class at a time for about an hour to share about Blessed Anne Marie, her spirituality, and her work.

**CC:** How wonderful! Passing on our story to the young. Tell us now about the recognition Anne Marie received in 2011.

**SC:** In 2011 Anne Marie’s work was recognized by the international project supported by the UN and UNESCO that commemorates the abolition movement. A bronze plaque depicting the map of the key sites was erected on one of our buildings, and billboards were placed at the entrance to each of the villages (see photo). Of all those recognized, Anne Marie is the only one who personally freed slaves. In May of 2011, we held a great celebration, long in preparation.

**CC:** Tell our readers a little about effect this recognition has had. Aside from the community’s involvement in this wonderful event, you have been receiving Cluny Sisters and Associates for years. Has that changed since 2011?

**SC:** Yes, very much. We have visitors now from France and all around the world who come to visit and want to learn more. They come in ones and twos and in big tour buses, and Cluny Sisters come from every continent.

There are Catholics, other Christians, people of other faiths, and unbelievers – all drawn to the story of this woman who dared to do the “unthinkable” and succeeded.

**CC:** How has this affected your community life? It must get hectic!

**SC:** Yes, it does get busy, but above all, it is a gift. We are all united in this beautiful ministry of welcome, where each sister can participate according to her gifts. In addition to the “pilgrims”, we also receive many groups of children and adults who come annually to walk “in the footsteps of Blessed Anne Marie”. Recognition has come from the public sector and from the government. The General and Regional councils at Dijon, having attended 2011 ceremonies, have requested the Blessed Anne Marie Expo for that city.

**CC:** And for you, Sister Chantal?

**SC:** Personally it has been a challenging but a beautiful experience. It allows me to communicate my passion for living the gospel as Anne Marie lived it; helping people be raised up; sharing the charism with others. God has bestowed a certain wisdom upon me, having lived religious life all these years, which allows me to work with ease with the novices, pass on the fundamentals of religious life, and help them catch the fire.

# Congratulations to Our Jubilarians



Sister Joseph Edwards  
**Platinum Jubilee**  
March 20, 2014

Seventy-five years of Vows is a long time and a long way from the depression years in Lawn, Newfoundland where Sister Joseph Edwards began her journey to Cluny. Leaving home at 16 to seek employment, Sister Joseph went to the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon where she met the Cluny Sisters. Her heart's desire was to become a missionary and go afar. In 1936, she left for Paris, France where she began her novitiate. She pronounced her vows on March 20, 1939.

Two weeks later she sailed to India, where she ministered first in Chandernagore, near Calcutta, and then in Cuddalore in South India. In 1951, she was missioned to the United States. She ministered first in Providence and then in Manville, RI.

From 1953 to 1976 she dedicated herself to the boys at St. Joseph Home for Boys in Philadelphia. Not a day goes by that she does not remember her 'boys' in prayer. They, too, fondly remember their 'Mamma Joe' with phone calls, visits, and mail. Recently one of them, John Bangert, interviewed her on his way to the 125th anniversary reunion at St. Joseph's Home at St. Clare Home in Newport, where she now resides.

After seventy-five years of dedication, her heart is full of gratitude for the gift of her missionary vocation and the many people she was privileged to serve. She looks forward now to being with her faithful and loving God forever.

Congratulations, Sister Joseph! We love hearing your many missionary stories. You are an inspiration of joyful service to us all.



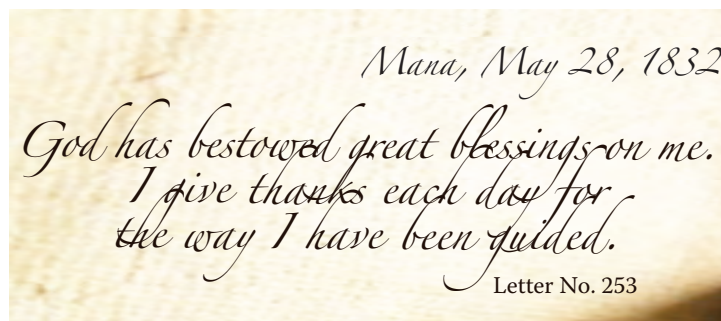
Sisters Josephine St. Leger  
**Diamond Jubilee**  
January 4, 2014

On January 4, 2014 our sister, Josephine, celebrated sixty years of service as a Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny. It seems scarcely possible as it feels like it was just yesterday that we celebrated her fiftieth with Sisters Anne Grogan and Pius Moore at St. Augustin Church.

Many memories have accumulated since the Clare girl set foot in Gallen Priory, Ferbane, Co. Offaly on September 8, 1951. From east to west, California to Rhode Island, and north to Ontario, Sr. Josephine has brought her kindness and expertise to young and old, in teaching, administration, pastoral work, and simply by being an optimistic, cheerful, generous fellow traveler along our way.

May the Lord continue to watch over her and guide her as she brings her faith and the Lord's love to all whom she encounters.

## From the desk of Blessed Anne Marie



# Cluny Associates Gather in Hamilton, Ontario

*Before* – reported by Terry Wallace

*During* – reported by Maureen Brady



Photo: Teresa Rodriguez

Canadian Associates L-R: Linda Pandzich, Ritva Saunders, Shirley Johnson (hidden in back), Maureen Harper, Terry Wallace, Jayne Kennedy, Aniko Ivanyi, Sister Regina Brunelle.

## Before

It all began with the seed of an idea – an audacious plan to bring together Cluny Associates from Canada and the United States – women gathered at the well of Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey’s spirituality and wisdom.

The Cluny Associates of Hamilton extended an invitation to sister-associates from West Virginia and California to spend a weekend together, a rare opportunity to meet each other and share the rich blessings we have all uniquely experienced as Cluny Associates. Thus it was that we Hamilton Associates spent our summer meetings planning and preparing for the weekend of October 18, 2013 with growing excitement. Coming together to pool our talents and resources to organize every detail of the weekend was a wonderfully bonding experience for our group.

After much anticipation the weekend finally arrived, and with great joy we welcomed Cluny Associates from West Virginia and California. Sr. Mary Patrice also came from California, while Sister Luke, leader of the province of the USA and Canada, joined us from Rhode Island. Much to our surprise and delight, Sister Joan, on home visit from Paris, dropped in on us too! Consistent with the spirit of Cluny, it was quite a celebration!

## During

With a song in our hearts, and eventually on our lips, five Cluny Associates from California and two from West Virginia accepted the invitation of the Hamilton, Canada group to meet together on the weekend of October 19th.

One purpose of our gathering was to share in and witness the annual promises of the Canadian Associates. This was done in the beautiful chapel at Good Shepherd Square. Everyone was moved by the lovely, simple ceremony during which the group prayerfully renewed their commitment to live their Christian life according to the spirituality of Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey.

From beginning to end, we experienced a spiritual unity through our gatherings with sisters, friends and associates to share bread, conversation, life stories, and the ways in which we each strive to follow God’s will to ‘do a little good’ in our world. Through our observations and conversations it was apparent that Anne Marie’s spirit is directing the faith, empathy and actions of those who associate themselves with Cluny.

While meditating on the woman at the well, many of us, though so diverse, encountered Anne Marie Javouhey. That became apparent as we met in small groups to reflect on some questions proposed by Sister Regina. Our open discussions produced very similar conclusions. For example, everyone agreed that we could begin a public relations campaign to promote the canonization of Blessed Anne Marie whom we clearly view as “A Woman of and for Our Time.” Clearly, Anne Marie experienced many challenges connected with the politics of nation and church. We face similar challenges in our own daily lives and work. So, it is right that we share the story of Blessed Anne Marie’s life and action for such sharing is needed in our world. We also talked about our use of social media. Since Pope Francis likes to “tweet”, we concluded, “Let’s

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## Cluny Associates (Continued)

bombard him with ‘tweets’ and e-mail reminding him of Anne Marie’s relevance today!”

In another session, Sister Mary Patrice led us to reflect on our call as Cluny Associates. We discussed some quotes from Pope Francis’ message for World Mission Day before viewing Sister’s presentation on her recent pilgrimage to the ‘Cluny Sources’ with a large group of English-speaking Cluny Sisters. We concluded by considering the possibility of another such pilgrimage in 2015 for Cluny Associates and interested friends.



Photo: Teresa Rodriguez

Associates L-R: Maureen Brady, Rosita Perez, Colleen Kaveney, Theresa Rodriguez (front), Sister Mary Patrice Watson, Linda Pandzich (host)



Photo: Teresa Rodriguez

WV Associates Cathy Mounts, L and Cathy Mario, R with Sister Luke, M.

Lest we give the impression that our time together was all work and no play, we can assure everyone we did get involved in some touristy things as well. In fact our five days of moving in the glorious autumn-colored leaves, flowers, trees and hills, were amazing. In witnessing the work of the Sisters and Associates in so many ‘multi-national’ Church groups, we experienced wonderful example and motivation.

### After

We set out with a keen desire to “know” each other as Cluny Associates. This led to the logical result of “love.” Now, more than ever, we are united in living the mission of Blessed Anne Marie in today’s world – the world of now. With hearts full of thanksgiving for all we shared, we say: “Blessed are those who give; blessed are those who receive. Blest are the enriching memories out of which our story is made.”

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## In Memoriam Affiliate Kathleen Walsh

Kay Trecker Walsh, was an active parishioner at St. Catherine Labouré Parish in Torrance, CA, where she met the Cluny Sisters serving in the parish school. A mother of five, she was actively engaged in the parish and school. Her generosity and dedication witnessed to her deep faith.

Her many decades of service have greatly influenced a wide range of people, especially our Cluny family.

She now has bequeathed a rich inheritance to her five beloved children, eight cherished grandchildren, her precious great-granddaughter and everyone who knew her.

Before Kay’s Mass of Christian Burial concluded, her son, Steven, read a message of thanks composed by Kay. Children of Saint Catherine Labouré School choir brought the celebration to a close with the beautiful hymn: “On Eagle’s Wings”. Indeed, God is holding her in the palm of his hand.



## Cluny in India

### Nayan Sarki, 16, Speaks to the 68th UN General Assembly

Sister Sabeshna Thapa

Director of the rehab centre for child laborers in Darjeeling District.

**O**n August 27, 2013, a local newspaper in Darjeeling District, India announced that 108 children had launched an 11-point rights manifesto demanding that the government keep nine percent of its gross domestic product for a child's future. The children were also pressing for inclusion of these rights in the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals agenda and the national manifestoes of political parties for the 2014 general elections.

Eleven of the 108 children were chosen to travel to the 68th UN General Assembly in New York to testify for the cause of children in poverty worldwide. Nayan Sarki, 16 years old, was selected from Cluny's Bal Suraksha Abhiyan Trust (BSA) to be part of this children's delegation.

Nayan comes from a poor and broken family. His mother left him when he was barely two years old under the care of his alcoholic father who completely neglected his son who was then forced to become a child laborer to survive. A Cluny Sister conducting a survey of child laborers identified Nayan's situation and placed him under the banner of BSA (Bal Suraksha Abhiyan). He was later enrolled in mainstream education and has successfully completed his first public examination. Now, he is in standard XI.

BSA is a movement initiated and led by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in Kalimpong to ensure the safety, protection, and empowerment of child laborers. The

organization was selected to participate at the National level of the **Nine Is Mine** program at New Delhi from August 23-27. Nine Is Mine is a participatory child-led advocacy program based on the United Nations Millennium Declaration that aims to influence all the governments of the world to allocate at least 5% for education and 4% for health from the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as recommended by UNESCO and WHO respectively.

The **Nine Is Mine** Campaign selected the eleven children from different states of India on the basis of vulnerability. From September 17-23, 2013, the delegation took part in the 68th UN General Assembly held at the New York Headquarters.. The goal was twofold: to draw attention to the UN Millennium Declaration calling for 9% of every government's GDP as the minimum standard for aid to children; and to stress to world leaders the importance of the voices of children as an important component in the dialogue defining a more inclusive, poverty and hunger-free world.

Each child from the delegation was asked to prepare a talk on his or her own issues. Based on his own experience, Nayan spoke on the Right to Food.

(See also: <http://kalimpongnewsexpress.blogspot.ca/2013/02/four-child-laborers-rescued.html>)



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*Bringing Hope & Compassion*

Marker designating Blessed Anne Marie's home as one of the five sites on the circuit dedicated to celebrating human rights and the abolition of slavery.



Photos: Sr. Marie Cooper

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