

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

# Connections

## Cluny Leadership Gathers in Reunion

Sister Luke Parker



Photo: Sister Luke Parker

In late April, Sister Marie Egyptienne and all the Sisters of the Province of Reunion welcomed the Cluny leadership arriving from all around the world for the gathering of the Council of the Congregation. At St. Denis airport, Reunionnais; Cluny sisters, associates, students and faculty greeted us with smiles, cheers and songs, welcoming us to this small island in the Indian Ocean. A great and beautiful mission began here in 1817 with the arrival of four Cluny Sisters, just ten years after Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey had founded the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in 1807.

A consultative body, the Council of the Congregation gathers province leaders every six years to track the implementation of Chapter directives and orientations. Fifty-nine sisters gathered in Reunion from the five continents. On the Feast of the Good Shepherd, Sister Claire Houareau,

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Thank you.

Since you last heard from Cluny Connections, our congregational leadership worldwide met in and returned home from the lovely tropical isle of Reunion. Sister Luke gives us a glimpse of what happened there.

Those of you who knew Sr. Andrew Crean and maybe haven't heard of her sudden death will most likely experience the same sense of shock and loss as we did at the news when you read her obituary. May she rest in the peace!

Sister Marie Edel brings us up-to-date on the situation in Nepal as rescue-workers, volunteers and many members of religious congregations working in Nepal strive to do the impossible in reaching out to the thousands of victims of the April earthquake there. During the second week in September. Sister Subeshna Thapa will participate in a UN Child Rights conference. More about that in a later issue!

Sister Mary Patrice writes about three Cluny sisters journeying to West Virginia to support our associates there and the Canadian associates send us a picture of a joyful reunion with a former associate now a novice of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.

Some of you may have heard that St. Martin is one of the patrons of the Congregation. Sister Marie Cooper shares a story about that connection and the reason for our interest in this Year of St. Martin in France.

Cluny has missions in Cuba. Given the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba you might find Sr. Joan Van der Zyden's article interesting.

Last but not least, *Did You Know* springs a little surprise and reminds us of some important issues to pray about and respond to as the Lord may call us to do!

Sister Regina

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# Associates' Update

Sister Regina Brunelle



Front L-R: Sr. Margaret, Diane Swain, Sr. Mary Patrice, Connie Bazzilla, Martha Cody, Kathy Mounts; Back L-R: Debbie Mullins, Frances Campoy, Patsy Ojeda, Francine Ferrell, Mary Casey, Doris Zappia, Patty Jo Brammer, Cathy Marino, Mary Ann Lasley

**O**n June 28 Sisters Eugenia Brady, Mary Patrice Watson and Margaret Nellieakunnel travelled to West Virginia from Rhode Island to connect with the Cluny Associates there. Sister Margaret, who hails from India but has been working in West Africa for 30 years, was in the States for the Mission Co-op Appeals for the Province of West Africa. She was thrilled to go to parts of North America she had never dreamed of seeing and the associates were delighted with her sharing of Cluny missions in Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Ghana.

Kathy Mounts of Chapmanville and Cathy Merino of the Logan Parish were on hand to greet the sisters when they arrived in Chapmanville on July 1. It was "homecoming" for Mary Patrice, who was missioned in West Virginia from 1997 to 2001, while for Sisters Eugenia and Margaret it was a chance to taste the delights of Wild and Wonderful West Virginia! Cluny Sisters served in West Virginia from 1985 to 2004. Our Associates there have continued on their own, welcoming new members and witnessing to the Cluny charism in their everyday lives.

More details as well as pictures at: <http://cluniusandcanada.blogspot.com/2015/08/sisters-visit-associates-in-west.html?spref=fb>



Hamilton Associates

L-R: Terry Wallace, Mary Jean Marcuzzi, Aniko Ivanyi, Sister Christine Carbotte, CSJ, Jayne Kennedy, Maureen Harper, Sister Regina Brunelle, and Ritva Saunders

# 1700th Anniversary of Cluny Patron, St. Martin

Sister Marie Cooper



Photo: Sr. Marie Cooper

Frieze on the outer wall of the cathedral of Tours depicting Martin and the beggar.

**B**lessed Anne Marie, was baptized on the feast of St. Martin, and she considered this date as her true birthday. There was great devotion to Martin where she grew up. Thus she developed devotion to him.

Saint Martin, known as the Merciful, Bishop of Tours, was born at Sabaria (modern Hungary) in 316. Martin served in the army unwillingly as a catechumen. He is widely known for taking pity on a poor beggar and giving him half his cloak. During the night, Martin had a mystical experience of Christ appearing as the beggar in the half cloak. Soon after Martin was baptized, he asked to resign his commission in the army. Accused of being a coward, Martin stood unarmed at the front lines. The attacking army surrendered, and he was released from his commission.

Martin lived as a hermit, and after several years was named bishop of Tours. He continued his monastic life, and his dwelling became the monastery of Marmoutiers. He did not spare himself on his missionary journeys, announcing the good news of the Gospel. Martin was known for his compassion, and his ability to bring the angry and aggressive to merciful and compassionate responses. He is regarded as the founder of monasticism in Western Europe. His monks traveled to England and Ireland evangelizing and founding monasteries.

He was buried in November 11, 316 at Tours, the date of his feast. The cathedral built there was destroyed during the revolution, but some of his relics were recovered and are at the cathedral of St. Gatien in Tours.

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## Cluny Sisters in Cuba

Sister Joan Van der Zyden

It may be interesting to those who have followed the re-establishing of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba on July 20, 2015, to learn that Cluny Sisters have been working there since 1997. Four sisters work in two communities. Guided by the same missionary spirit that animated Blessed Anne-Marie when she said 'yes' to the invitation to send sisters to Reunion in 1817, the Cluny province of Peru said 'yes' to the Bishop of Matanzas, Cuba. Matanzas, the capital of the Cuban province of Matanzas is known for its poets, culture, and Afro-Cuban folklore. The capital is located on the northern shore of the island of Cuba, on the Bay of Matanzas 56 miles east of Cuba's capital, Havana.

Our communities however, are located in two smaller towns to the southeast of Matanzas. The first community was founded in San Miguel de los Baños. In 2001, a second community was founded in Colon.



Spending time with the children.



Sister Maria Isabel (General Councilor) and Sister Virginia Sicca (former Provincial of Peru-Cuba) at the canteen.

Needless to say, the people of the area are very poor. Much of the work of the sisters is to help them survive the dearth of provisions available to them. To that end, the sisters in both towns run 'el comedor' or 'the canteen'. This is a ministry of hospitality that welcomes the older people in the town, who really don't have enough to eat, to come together for a meal. The sisters, along with a small group of helpers, run the canteen twice a week.

The sisters of both communities are also involved in a variety of other pastoral services. They minister in the two parishes doing catechesis and Eucharistic ministry but much of their ministry is also visiting the families in their homes.

It is a small mission but the sisters are a wonderful presence among the people.

As we Clunys say, "we go wherever there is a little good to be done."

# In Memoriam

## Sister Andrew Crean

Who was Sr. Andrew? Those who knew her think of a warm, gracious, even-tempered woman ever attentive to what would please others. Never a day passed without her loaf of freshly baked Irish soda bread appearing on the table! She had a great smile and hers was always a kind, welcoming presence quick to put on the kettle for a cup of tea for visitors wherever she lived. Her graciousness extended beyond physical contact to e-mail: you never e-mailed her even a group piece without getting a response giving news about herself and the community. Sr. Andrew was a faithful friend who maintained connections over the long haul.

Somewhat shy, she was nevertheless at ease with people and enjoyed the friendship of others from bishops to the homeless asking for a sandwich at the Providence, RI Cathedral rectory door. She was especially kind to the elderly wherever she served; bringing communion to the sick was a ministry she especially cherished because it provided her with an opportunity to bring comfort to so many.

She had a phenomenal memory for names and people so the past was never far away. She amazed us when, after a pilgrimage to Rome, she provided a running commentary on all the photos of churches and works of art without a note!

Through her avid reading, she acquired a wealth of knowledge. Because she was basically an introvert, she always thought things through before she shared, and even then, shared only when invited. There was always a good deal of wisdom in what she had to say.

She was a great cook but never thought of herself as that. During a sabbatical stay at St. Stephen's Priory in Dover, MA the cook was unable to get to work for days because of a huge nor'easter that buried the region in snow. Sr. Andrew generously volunteered to help out. This was no sinecure since the Priory housed not only the Friars but the sabbatical guests as well. So delicious were her meals that the Friars tried to con her into staying on as cook!

Born into a profoundly Christian family in Ireland, Sr. Andrew's deep childhood faith ripened into a spirituality of service that marked her life even before



**Sister Andrew Crean**

she entered religious life in 1960. She loved her family and, even though she had to polish their boots every Saturday night as a child, she especially cherished her three brothers who always warmly welcomed her back to the homestead on her visits home.

Her impact on those who knew her became very evident at the time of her death. The news was met with shock, disbelief, and tears. Health issues had required a stay at Los Gatos Convalescent Home, but she seemed to be improving and her community was looking forward to her return home. No one expected she would slip away so suddenly. A quick move to ER led to a room in Critical Care and next morning she was gone. To the sisters who broke the news at the Convalescent Home the tearful reaction of the staff spoke volumes about Sr. Andrew's way of slipping into the hearts of those who knew her. She had a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart. We are sure that, good and faithful servant that she was, she rests peacefully now in that love.

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### [1700th Anniversary of St. Martin \(Continued\)](#)

Like St. Martin, Blessed Anne Marie is known for her care for the poor, her great missionary efforts, her great, expansive heart, and the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, establishing ministries on three continents prior to her death.

As a congregation, we join in spirit with the diocese of Tours in celebrating this great anniversary year which opens on November 10, 2015.

# Update on Relief Work in Nepal

A report from Sister Edel Rai



Photo: Sister Marie Edel Rai

Hiking up to the villages.



Photo: Sister Marie Edel Rai

Clinic set up in the Manby camp.

On April 12, 2015 a quake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale devastated Nepal. It is also known as the Gorkha earthquake. It killed more than 9,000 people and injured more than 23,000. In May a second quake measuring 7.3 hit the country again. From Kalimpong, Sr. Edel Rai shares about the work of a medical team based in Gorka where Cluny sisters are located. Organized by Fr. Teji, MI, team members include Brothers Mallon and Madju, mi as well as Sr. Augustine, a Nepalese Cluny Sister missioned to Gorka. Sr. Augustine provides the essential task of translating for the medical personnel.

On one excursion into the mountains, the group set up a two-day camp at Manbu where they treated 141 patients. Nepalese soldiers involved in humanitarian work since the earthquake brought bedridden patients to the site. They also helped provide the necessary firewood, pots and utensils.

Everywhere, the children, left in a terrible state of shock after the quake, are the saddest sight. Many are so traumatized that medical personnel working in Manbu could not even succeed in giving them the all-important tetanus injection.

Access to earthquake victims is difficult (see pictures). Roads are impassable, made doubly so because of the landslides brought on by the rainy season.

The success of the Manby camp was greatly enhanced, thanks to Sr. Augustine's command of the Nepalese language. Because of it, the team was able

to gather many of the villagers in the evening to teach them health and survival techniques. The villagers, so isolated from the outside world by the quake, greatly appreciated the team's services, begging them to return for similar programs soon, or even just to visit! In spite of their great suffering, they could sing and dance the traditional songs and dances to express their appreciation.

Fr. Teji mi wrote to Sr. Marie Edel, "Nepal weeps. We pray that the Lord our God might bless these mountains and valleys and all its inhabitants. Please do pray for our mission."

To which the only response can be, Amen! For these brave people, we do pray to the Lord. What are the Holy Spirit's whisperings to our hearts about other ways we might help?

Please see Page 2 of this issue to make a donation.



Photo: Sister Marie Edel Rai

The team - Sister Augustine is third from left.



Photo: Sister Luke Parker

Superior General, opened the sessions with the words, “Christ the Good Shepherd brings us together on this special feast, to this place, to this Mountain, La Montagne. So it is with great joy that I welcome you to Cluny-La Montagne and Reunion. We have come to ‘Tell our Cluny Story’ with gratitude for the past, with passion for the mission entrusted to us and with hope as we embrace the future.” She challenged us to search together for the Will of God in the signs of the times and the unfolding realities of our local ministries, placing all under the care of Mary, our Perpetual Mother General.

Our agenda focused on the nine orientations that came out of our 2012 General Chapter: restructuring at the central and local levels; the gift and challenges of our internationality; authority as servant leadership; spirituality; missionary priorities, and the new challenges raised by such global concerns as family, faith, modern slavery and the impact of the ecological crisis especially on the poor among whom we minister.

My personal experience of the Council of the Congregation is marked by deep gratitude and renewed energies to continue to serve the Church and the World with the gift and liberating charism of Anne Marie Javouhey through the mission entrusted to us as Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. As Blessed Anne Marie once wrote in a letter, “What a wonderful and beautiful vocation is ours to live deeply our baptism and this call to discipleship!” May we continue to do a little good wherever God’s Will leads us, spreading the joy of the Gospel and God’s love on every continent!

Fifty-nine sisters gathered from the Provinces of:

Angola/Guinea Bisseau  
Antilles/Guyanne  
Argentina  
Australia/Papua New Guinea  
Brazil  
Central Africa  
France  
Guinea  
Guinee-Bissau  
Haiti  
India/Nepal - 6 provinces  
Ireland/Great Britain  
Madagascar  
Mozambique  
New Zealand/Philippines  
Pacific  
Paraguay/Argentina  
Peru/Cuba  
Portugal  
Reunion  
Senegal/Niger/Mali  
Seychelles/Tanzania  
Sierra Leone/The Gambia/Ghana  
Spain  
St. Pierre & Miquelon  
USA/Canada  
West Indies



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## Bringing Hope & Compassion

### Did You Know?

#### New Life

Sister Marie Yannick Saièh, of Haitian origin and member of the Province of the United States and Canada, has been acting as liaison person for the diocese of Norwich, Connecticut for several years. Recently, Bishop Michael R. Cote, ordinary of the diocese, requested that Sister Yannick’s focus become ministering to the large Haitian community located in Norwich. The congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny has responded by opening a community in Norwich whose mission is to collaborate with the parish priest to forge bonds between the different cultural elements of the parish. Please pray for the success of this mission.

#### Vatican Gardens–Home of Pontifical Academy of Sciences

“Of the many buildings housed within the Vatican gardens, one can find the Pontifical Academy of Science which ... serves not only as a center for academic learning, but also as the home of the Global Freedom Network, established by Pope Francis just a year ago to solidify the ecumenical fight against modern-day slavery.” (Source: *America Magazine*, August 2015)

#### Pope Francis on Ecology:

“Today ... we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”  
 (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*)

Challenged by *Laudato Si*? Check out Fr. Al Fritsch’s Earthhealing website at [www.earthhealing.info](http://www.earthhealing.info). These timely reflections help slow us down to really SEE Creation in a new way!

#### Food for thought from Russia re: the USA response to GMOs

“There have been marches, vocal demonstrations, petitions, and laws banning GMOs, but the USA is still lagging in the ‘democratic’ freedoms it has promised its people. Russia, on the other hand, has completely banned GMOs, placing a moratorium on their imports for 10 years. The nation rejects GMOs due to numerous dangers, while the US continues to allow Monsanto, Dow, Bayer, Syngenta, and their bullying kind to contrive a cold war on the American people.” (Source: “The Organic Food Guy” Jeff Cox)

To date, Canada has no laws against GMOs.

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