

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

## Connections

### Connecting with Our Roots

Sister Mary Patrice Watson

In July, fifty-five English speaking Cluny Sisters gathered in France to open doors specially connected with our “Sources”. We were truly international with sisters from all over the world: Canada, Haiti, India, Ireland, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea, Rome, Seychelles, USA, West Africa, and West Indies. On the first day we ritually crossed through the threshold of the front door of our Mother House – the “Door of Faith.” Later that morning, Sister Claire Houareau’s reflection on the “open door” invited us to be ready to experience the light, joy, friendship and communion, freedom and trust that an open door symbolizes. For thirty days we explored many places. In and around Paris we gained a better understanding of the political and spiritual atmosphere of Anne-Marie’s time. In and around the Javouhey home in Chamblanc, we remembered Anne-Marie’s call and the liberating mission God entrusted to her. In and around our first Mother House, the Recollets convent in Cluny, we celebrated both the feast of Blessed Anne-Marie and the *Cor unum* that still binds us together. Through all these experiences we truly experienced the Lord’s goodness in leading us to our “Sources”. As Sr. Claire had mentioned when she greeted us at “the Door of Faith”, we made many

discoveries as we passed through the door to spiritual renewal; the door to our hidden selves; and the door of memories. We passed through many doors this month, some of them totally unexpected! With deep faith and joyful hearts we journeyed together and sang:

*All over the world, the Spirit is moving.*

*All over the world, as Anne Marie dreamt it would be.*

*All over the world, there’s a mighty revelation,*

*Of the glory of the Lord, and the love that sets us free.*



Photo: Sister Joan Van der Zanden

**Sisters Mary Patrice Watson and Maria Rocha** beating on Anne Marie’s father’s drum which was used to summon people to town meetings when he was mayor and which Anne Marie used to gather the children to teach them about Jesus while people thought she was teaching the Three Rs.

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## From the Editor's Desk



*A*s this issue goes to press in mid-  
August, September looms ahead.  
Summer seemed short this year with  
only one intense heat wave in July and  
the rest somewhat cool and rainy!

Since our last issue, we have watched  
Pope Francis mark the Church with  
his own pastoral personality and  
style and heard him urge us all to  
enthusiasm in living our Christian  
faith at World Youth Days.

Floods, earthquakes, wars and  
violence have marked the months  
since our last Cluny Newsletter. So it's  
refreshing to hear about Cluny Sisters  
from all over the world gathering at  
the Mother house in Paris to revisit  
their roots; working among the  
Papuan population in New Guinea;  
lay Christians bringing relief to the  
poor in California; and a Cluny  
Affiliate whose long life reflects the

missionary call of the congregation to  
"go make disciples".

Cluny Connections hopes that the  
article about Monsanto seed will spur  
interest in the ramifications of GMOs  
(genetically modified organisms).  
Their impact goes far beyond what  
appears on the surface!

Finally, congratulations are in order  
to Sister Marie Cooper who has been  
appointed chair of the congregation's  
virtual global concerns committee and  
to the Cluny Associates in Hamilton  
who have been excitedly planning to  
welcome Associates from California,  
West Virginia and possibly Rhode  
Island for a weekend 'Around the  
Well' in October. May the encounter  
be everything they hope and dream  
it will be!

Sister Regina Brunelle

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# Monsanto: “Improving Agriculture, Improving Lives” ... Really?

Sister Regina Brunelle

There’s been a lot of furor around Monsanto seeds of late, especially since President Obama signed the “Monsanto Protection Act” on March 28, 2013. Why? The Bill (officially H.R. 933) averted a government shutdown but contained a loophole that virtually allowed Monsanto and other biotech companies to exist above the law since genetically modified seeds are now protected from any litigation involving health risks. You may think such risks do not apply to you, but in fact, they do. The company’s genetically engineered corn, soy, wheat and beet crops have infiltrated our entire food system so you could be eating these products whether you want to or not.

Monsanto advertises itself as a sustainable agriculture company, improving agriculture and lives by helping farmers produce more food using fewer natural resources. If so, why are farmers as close to home as Canada and Haiti and as far away as India so opposed to the idea of using these seeds? Educated and organized by Haitian agronomists, after the earthquake in 2010 Haitian farmers in the central plateau categorically refused the “free” seed, demonstrating in a march on Port au Prince against the government’s acceptance of the “gift” of Monsanto seeds. In India, Cluny Sisters tell about the hundreds of farmers committing suicide after having been talked into buying Monsanto seeds. These farmers did not understand that the “magic” super

seeds were patented and that they were therefore legally forbidden to use the product of the seed for future harvests. Having to buy new seed every year resulted in bankruptcy and, deeply shamed, these farmers took their own lives. As a result, India recently turned down Monsanto’s patent application.

Resistance seems to be building. Natural News recently reported that “Though the mainstream media was nowhere to be found in covering it, the largest ever global protest against genetically-modified organisms (GMOs) took place on May 25, 2013, in at least 52 countries and 436 major cities worldwide. The protest, which was initiated as part of the grass roots March Against Monsanto movement and included more than two million marchers, marks a tipping point in the debate over GMOs, and particularly their unlabeled presence in the food supplies of many countries, including in the U.S.”

In July, the Italian ministries of Agriculture, Health and Environment decreed a ban on Monsanto’s MON810 maize. The decree states that Monsanto seeds have “a negative effect on biodiversity”. A public survey shows that 80% of the public supports the decree.

An interesting experiment was conducted in South Dakota to determine which corn squirrels preferred: GMO or non-GMO. Year old organic corn was put on one feeder and fresh GMO corn on another. The experiment was repeated five times

with different varieties of organic corn from neighboring farms, but the result was always the same: squirrels preferred the non-GMO corn even though it was stale and the GMO corn was fresh. This may not have been a major scientific trial, but are the squirrels telling us something?

If we’re concerned about the long-term effects of GMOs, and the growing power of major companies to spread their use worldwide, what can we do? Fortunately, the Monsanto Protection Act has a relatively short lifespan. Unless Congress renews it, it’s slated to expire when the fiscal year ends on September 30. It’s up to us to see that renewal does not happen. We can contact our representatives in government and put pressure on them not to renew Section 735 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013. We can also educate ourselves about GMOs. [www.saynotogmos.org](http://www.saynotogmos.org) is a good place to start. It provides accessible information about grass roots education, activities and resources for consumer choice and a genetically viable future.

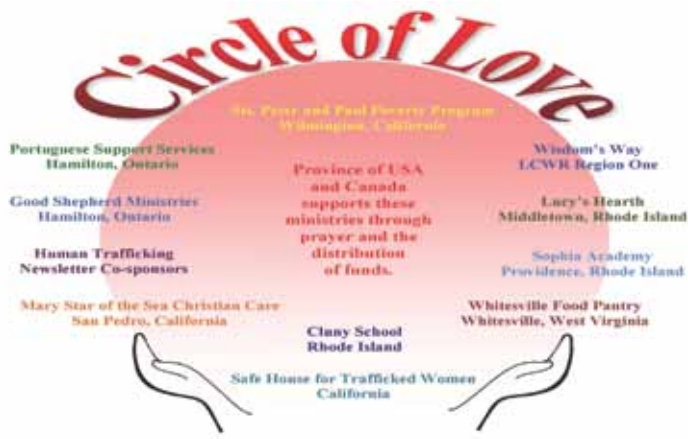
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Before

After

Photo: Courtesy of the Food Revolution Network



# Cluny Circle of Love in San Pedro, California

## Mary Star of the Sea Christian Care

**Toni Martinovich**

**Volunteer at the Mary Star of the Sea Christian Care Program**

Mary Star of the Sea has a long tradition of helping the needy in the Harbor Area. Sandwiches and treats were handed out from the Rectory and clothing was distributed from the old Convent basement. The volunteers were dedicated, but they needed help! In 1988, our Pastor and Deacon invited anyone in the Parish interested in helping the poor to attend the first meeting of what would soon be called: Christian Care. At that first meeting we decided that there would be no dues like a regular club and that everyone in the parish would be a member.

Our first big event to raise money was a Gala Dinner. The following year

and every year after we have held an International Brunch on the first Sunday in November. It's an International Brunch because every one of our ethnic clubs, societies and even some family groups in our Parish are involved. It's one of the many blessings of this ministry that when asked to help, these wonderful people cook, serve and clean-up every year on a completely volunteer basis.

Christian Care also coordinates the Lenten Meals. This is another volunteer event where the societies vie for the chance to prepare and serve a meal to the Parish. Most years we have so many groups

wanting to participate we wish we had more Fridays in Lent! During the rest of the year there are volunteers helping with the Monday through Friday free lunches (in July over 1,100 bagged lunches were distributed), the free clothing give-away and food bags on Mondays, and Thanksgiving and Christmas food bags.

Our motto is "We Care." 2013 marks Christian Care's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary. As long as we are needed, we will continue to live that motto.

Cluny is proud to support such a collaborative effort through our *Circle of Love!*

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## In Memoriam Affiliate Pauline O'Connor

On June 1, 2013 Pauline O'Connor died at the age of 89. Wife, proud mother of six and grandmother to many, Pauline was the essence of the wise woman in Proverbs. A Cluny Affiliate and friend, Pauline lived the charism of the congregation through her dedication to the education of youth, her own personal development (she earned an MA in Theology at the age of 70!) volunteering at St. Joseph Parish especially with the RCIA, Good Shepherd Centres,

Martha House and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). For many years, she delighted in organizing the annual Christmas pageant with the children in her neighborhood. These children, now adults, still remember and talk about these exciting moments in their childhood! Truly, she did not "eat her food in idleness"! May she now enjoy the reward of her labors!



## Cluny in Papua New Guinea

Sister Joan Van der Zyden

As the small airplane headed towards the ridge of the mountain in front of us, I quietly prayed that the pilot was seeing what I was seeing through the blanket of clouds that surrounded us. As we approached the ridge, he confidently took the plane up and over the top of the trees and started his descent onto the grass landing strip on the side of the mountain! We had reached Kanabea where three of our sisters and the people of the village had gathered to greet us. It was an extraordinary moment to step down from the small plane into the welcoming arms of the sisters and the traditional song and dance of the people of Kanabea. During my visit it was evident that the sisters' pastoral presence here is vital. It includes the administration of a literacy program in the village, training literacy coordinators in the surrounding villages, AIDS testing and the general coordination of the Catholic mission.

Let me take a step back to let you know that it was in March of this year that I had the privilege of visiting our sisters in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean and occupying the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, Papua New Guinea is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. It is not only one of the world's least explored areas but also one of the most rural areas in the world with only 18% of its population living in urban areas.

In partnership with the Diocese of Melbourne, the Cluny Sisters of the Region of Australia began their ministry in the mountain village of Kanabea in 1971. In 1996 the sisters opened a community in Bema, another isolated village in the mountains of the Gulf Province. We have recently opened a community in the capital city of Port Moresby as well. Currently, we have eleven sisters and four aspirants living in our three communities.



Sisters Anastasie, Pia, Dorothy join villagers in welcoming Sister Joan.

Papua New Guinea is a very difficult mission. Our two communities in the mountains, Kanabea and Bema, are extremely isolated from each other and from our community in Port Moresby. In visiting Bema, we again took a very small plane into the mountains and landed in the small village of Kaintiba. From there we walked up the mountain for two and a half hours to reach our three sisters in Bema. In this small isolated village, the sisters manage and teach in a high school that serves the villages of the surrounding mountains. As well, they provide a literacy program for those unable to attend high school. In both Kanabea and Bema, the sisters depend on good weather, good pilots and the grace of God for their arrivals and departures.

Being in the capital city, the mission of our Port Moresby community is less isolated. It includes ministry to the street children, formation of our young sisters, formation of sisters in Papua New Guinea through Xavier Institute and the overall coordination of our mission in Papua New Guinea. It has been a great help to the overall mission to have a community located in the city.

In leaving the sisters in Papua New Guinea I found myself with two very strong feelings. The first was that of deep gratitude for the opportunity to visit the sisters, for Sister Josephine O'Kelly's accompaniment, and for Sister Valerie O'Donnell's (Regional Leader) presence in Port Moresby. The second was an emotion hard to describe. It was an emotion that spoke to me of the passion these sisters have for their mission. It was an emotion that said, this is what it is all about - walking in the footsteps of Blessed Anne Marie in the midst of difficulty, whatever that might be and wherever that might take us! As I left Kanabea, Bema and finally Port Moresby, I promised each sister they would be in my prayers! I invite you to join me in holding our PNG sisters and this mission in prayer.



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*Bringing Hope & Compassion*

**Monsanto (Continued)**

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**Papua-New Guinea (Continued)**



**PNG Aspirants with Sister Valerie O'Donnell, Regional Leader in Port Moresby**

Photo: Sister Joan Van der Zyden

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