

## Outreach to Haiti Sister Yannick Saiëh's New Ministry

Sister Joan Van der Zyden

In our last issue we mentioned that Sister Yannick Saiëh has been missioned to Haiti on behalf of the Diocese of Norwich, Connecticut. She serves as the Bishop's representative to the diocesan projects in Haiti. She writes:

*The Diocese of Norwich supports two Missions in Port-au-Prince: the Norwich Mission House and Hospice St. Joseph. As a result of the earthquake of January 12th both houses collapsed. At present we are renting another house to continue our ministry for the Norwich Mission House. Hospice St. Joseph was able to make arrangements to set up a temporary place for offices and to run the clinic in the courtyard.*

*The Norwich Mission House is involved in different ministries: Twinning, hospitality to missionaries, Medical Missions and Education. We have 13 parishes in the United States that are twinned with parishes in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. We welcome the missionaries who come to Haiti to enter more deeply into the lives of the people. During their stay, we accompany them to visit project sites and parishes. We also organize medical clinics throughout Port-au-Prince. We provide full tuition scholarships and enrollment fees. We also loan necessary books to the students. Since the earthquake, we have been involved mostly in evaluating the damages in the parishes and other projects.*



Sister Yannick

*At Hospice St. Joseph, we have a clinic that is open to assist patients for a reasonable fee from Monday to Friday. It is free for those who cannot afford to pay. We welcome Missionaries who are serving in Port-au-Prince and also in different areas of Haiti when they come to Port-au-Prince. We also have a sponsorship program, which provides assistance for tuition, enrollment fees, books and [school] uniforms.*

*Right after the earthquake, medical teams came from the United States to assist us. Now the clinic is functioning at regular hours under tents.*

*Sister Yannick also assists Cluny Sisters who were severely affected by the earthquake.*

Read more about Cluny Sisters in Haiti on page 5.

In  
this  
Issue

Outreach to Haiti  
Sister Yannick Saiëh

On the Move

Province Web Site Launched

New Beginnings:  
Mary Star of the Sea  
Community

Forest Biomes

Cluny Around the World  
Cluny Sisters in Haiti

Rebuild Cluny in  
Haiti Appeal



# Province Web Site Launched!

www.clunyusandcanada.org

Sister Marie Cooper

## Cluny Connections

is a publication of the  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny  
Province of USA & Canada

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Visit our new home page to  
connect with our Province. From there,  
you can click on the various menu items:

*Who We Are* – as members of an  
international congregation we are  
connected with Cluny Sisters around the  
world, gifted with the same charism for  
service in the Church and standing in  
solidarity with our sisters and brothers  
everywhere.

*What We Do* – describes the variety  
of ways we strive to bring hope and  
compassion to people around us and  
our social justice initiatives and features  
photos of our sisters.

*Share in Our Mission* – many are the ways  
you and others share in our mission. This  
page and its links will take you to pages  
describing vocations to Cluny, Cluny  
Associates, and ways to support our  
mission through a financial gift.

*Rebuilding Cluny in Haiti* – leads you to  
other pages with more information about  
the situation in that country and the  
experience of Cluny Sisters there.

*Pray with Us* – Cluny prayers and  
devotions, seasonal reflections and a link  
to a daily prayer site.

*Cluny Around the World* links to our  
congregation web site which is available  
in English, Spanish, Portuguese and  
French.

*Cluny News* links to the *Cluny  
Connections* Newsletter, the 2010  
Province Calendar and our photo gallery.

*Web Site Design*: significant in the design  
are the “Cluny” blue and the ginkgo  
leaf. Blessed Anne Marie planted a  
ginkgo on the grounds of the Mother  
House in 1848. It has greeted Cluny  
Sisters these many years as they enter;  
sheltered us from the heat of summer  
sun; and has gifted us with bright green  
leaves in the spring and a stupendous  
golden explosion in the fall. The ginkgo,  
with its healing properties, also reminds  
us of our mission to bring hope and  
compassion to an anguished world.

We hope that you’ll find the site  
informative and enjoyable.



## On the Move

Sister Bernadette Lapré

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# New Beginnings: Mary Star of the Sea Community

Cluny Sisters in California

**I**n the life of Blessed Anne Marie, our Founder, it is written: "A Sister of St. Joseph is a bird on a branch, ever ready to take flight." What a flight it's been for these nine birds from many branches in different trees and different locations.

We had known for months that it was time to consolidate, but we did not see clearly how to do this. Early in 2009 our leadership initiated talks with the respective pastors of Saints. Peter and Paul, Wilmington and St.. Stephen's, Monterey Park. Through the clerical grapevine, Father John Provenza, the pastor of Mary Star of the Sea Parish in San Pedro, heard of our discernment. He contacted Sister Genevieve and invited us to consider the parish convent. It was empty of sisters for many years and now being used for parish offices, etc. It has three stories, a basement and an elevator.

Father Provenza offered us full use of the second and third floors and to share the first floor with parish groups. Many good things about the location of this convent attracted us. First is its proximity to Jeanne Jugan Residence where Sisters Brigid Costelloe and Laetitia O'Donoghue live. It's so much better to be a short drive away. Other positives are: the parish church and elementary school are outside our door; we are two blocks from downtown San Pedro; a reliable bus service passes our door; and Providence Little Company of Mary Hospital is five blocks up the hill from us. All this was very attractive, but none of us was ready to make such a huge move without first looking at it from every angle. Gratefully Divine Providence took care of everything for us very quickly.

By Easter we had all had an opportunity to visit Mary Star and tour the convent, even Sister Mary Josephine who in July would move from Little Rock, Arkansas to the Wilmington community. Those visits were followed by many discussions, prayer, fasting and the decision that this re-location was indeed God's will for us. Sister Joan came out in July and led all the negotiations regarding contracts, rent, renovations, etc. The contractors began intense work in early



**Community friends surround Sister Loretto Moynihan at the Mary Star of the Sea Convent housewarming.**

August as our move-in date was set for early October. August and September were incredibly busy months as we planned and supervised both the renovations in San Pedro and the moves from our Wilmington and Monterey Park 'nests'. At the same time, our Torrance 'nest' was readied for leasing to the Notre Dame Sisters.

Monday, October 5, 2009 ranks in our memories as a never to be forgotten date - our official moving day. It took five professional movers, two trucks and some solid volunteer helpers to load and unload everything from our 'nests', but that was nothing compared to what we found early that first morning! When we returned from Mass, our kitchen counter was overflowing with welcome cards and treats from the elementary school classes and parishioners. Each class in the school, K-8, has adopted one of us so we try to drop in for visits and join them when they have class Masses.

We have a small prayer room on the third floor and the big chapel of the original convent has been restored on the first floor. It is there that we gather for our community prayer. From our third floor rooftop we have a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean and harbors. Two large rooms and a kitchen on the first floor are used by many parish groups including teams of parishioners who gather six days a week for the Christian Care program. Since 1995 they have fed nearly 50,000

poor and homeless people. It is a joy for us to be so closely connected with all these parishioners.

Mary Star of the Sea is a multi-ethnic parish of about 5,700 families. It is responsible for the Catholic Maritime Ministry in the Archdiocese and some of us are sharing a bit in the Saturday morning ministry at the port. The parish is alive with many groups that have invited us to serve in different ways. We're grateful that we've been able to gradually become more involved in the life of the parish through perpetual Eucharistic adoration; the Prayer Group; RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults); the Lenten Renewal Groups; Eucharistic Ministry at Mass and to the home bound; and the Baptismal preparation classes.

Sister Teresa Kenny still commutes to her bereavement ministry in St.. Catherine Labouré parish and Sister Genevieve continues to work in Adult-Literacy with Los Angeles Unified School District. Sister Elizabeth Butler has just completed the transition of the Saints Peter and Paul Poverty Program, which was operated by Cluny Sisters for 30 years, to the parish of Saints Peter and Paul.

We are all grateful for our many years of service in the wonderful parishes we left and we look forward to years of continued service here at Mary Star of the Sea. We are very happy and privileged to be together in this new Cluny 'nest'!



# Forest Biomes

Sister Loretto Moynihan

**F**orests and woodlands have accompanied mother Earth these many eons clothing and sheltering the original bare landscape. The earth has, in her tropical, temperate and taiga forests, reached out to the heavens for the sunlight and the rain, and so has become a living and productive planet.

Tropical, or rainforests, are the oldest living ecosystems, and though they cover only 6% of the earth's surface, they contain more than half of its plants and animal species. Located along the equatorial regions, rainforests have the highest concentration of our planet's life-energy. They also recycle everything: the dead plants and animals return their nutrients to the forest floor, while the food chain maintains an ecological harmony and balance. With heavy rainfalls of about 80 – 430 inches per year, rainforests are always green, since their leaves are not all shed in any one season.

About 50 million tribal people live in these rainforests and depend on them for food, medicine and shelter. For thousands of years indigenous groups have made extensive use of forest materials for health needs. Their Shamans played a crucial role in helping scientists discover the potential of tropical plants. In addition, rainforests provide us with exotic birds and colorful plants to enjoy, as well as many common products such as chocolate, cinnamon and rubber.

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The voice of Forest calls out to us ...

“Trees, woodlands and forests  
must claim our focus and serious attention  
as the life-line of our planet.”

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Considering the rainforest's hidden wealth, their destruction seems particularly deplorable. At the alarming rate of 6,000 acres per hour, human activities such as logging, hydroelectric projects and cattle ranching disrupt the balance of the ecosystem, affecting oxygen production, climate control, the water cycle and the web of symbiotic relationships. Industry and commerce see an avenue of profit in clearing the forests for agriculture and pasture land, encouraged by misguided government policy and World Bank projects. Many governments now face an enormous challenge in balancing economic growth and the preservation of their rainforest.

Unlike the rainforest, temperate forests are deciduous because they are located in mid-latitudes around the world. Characterized by cold winters and warm summers, they extend to the pine trees of the taiga (cold climate forests). The shortening days of fall stimulate the withdrawal of green chlorophyll from the trees, leaving the other colors to make an awesome canopy overhead. When the leaves fall they provide rich and abundant humus on the forest floor.



Due to demographics, the temperate forests are the most altered on the planet because human occupation naturally leads to the clearing and loss of acres of trees to the housing and construction industries. Agricultural farmlands now occupy vast stretches of what was once forest. Unlike the situation in the tropics, reforestation is progressing in this biome, adding thousands of acres of trees to alleviate the imbalance created by human occupation, and providing habitats for displaced fauna. City life is working to be 'green' again. In Syracuse, New York scientists are at work, and have identified thirty-one trees, such as sycamore, hawthorn and others that are high performers as storehouses of green house gases. These trees would be most valuable if planted at the center of cities where asphalt sends CO 2 straight into the atmosphere. Nationwide urban interest is growing in trees as a major capital investment to improve environment, the quality of life and offset the carbon footprint.

In the taiga we move in the polar directions, but remain outside the tundra. Climate here is one of snowy winters and warm summers. Precipitation comes in summer months, while freezing temperatures last for six months. The coniferous, or cone-bearing, forest has few species of vegetation. Fires clear the old growth and make room for the new so that sunlight can shine through for the new vegetation. Bogs, marshes and snow are common. The animals fight for the available food. Logging threatens the natural balance here as elsewhere.

Trees, woodlands and forests must claim our focus and serious attention as the life-line of our planet. All life systems and human wellbeing are dependent on the vitality of our forests and their support. The whole earth is mother to one comprehensive and all-inclusive ecosystem, and all of us humans need to recognize our limited but essential role in the interdependence and harmony necessary if our planet is to continue to live.

To read more about this topic, or support conservation, go to:  
[http://www.clunyusandcanada.org/pages/cluny\\_news\\_newsletter.html](http://www.clunyusandcanada.org/pages/cluny_news_newsletter.html), <http://www.earthday.org/earthday2010>, or  
<http://www.therainforestsite.com/clickToGive/homefaces?siteId=4>



## Cluny Sisters in Haiti: Hidden Heroes, Powerful Witnesses

Sister Marie Cooper

**T**raumatized by the experience of the 7.0 quake which lasted for more than 30 seconds, the sight of injury, death and destruction all around, loss of family members, friends and, fortunately, only several students: what were our 80 sisters in Haiti to do? Many of the sisters were injured, some seriously, and they had lost just about everything in 12 of the 14 communities, and the schools and clinics where they ministered. People were coming to them for help: the injured for medical attention, the homeless for shelter and the hungry for food and water.

The sisters did what they have always done. While aftershocks still shook their country that first night, Cluny Sisters gathered with the people to pray, huddled together near their convents. From the little they had, they shared with those who came for help. Fortunately, the seriously injured sisters were soon airlifted to Martinique and welcomed by our sisters there.

So it began—days of tending to the wounded in makeshift clinics in the open air and later under tents; distribution of food packets; meals for children; painstakingly slow removal of rubble; and inspection of the buildings at the many sites where the sisters lived and ministered. The days turned into weeks, and now have stretched into months of long hours, hard work, deep faith. Undeterred, the sisters carry on.

The response of the Cluny community and our friends around the world was swift: sisters (nurses) arrived from Guadeloupe and Trinidad to assist. In Ireland, the sisters began a fund drive. Two of them flew out Haiti with a plane full of supplies. Past students, collaborators, Affiliates and Associates, friends of the sisters sent donations. The Diocese of Port Elizabeth, South Africa earmarked its diocesan collection to be sent to the Cluny Sisters via Caritas. A past student of Cluny School in Newport, Ensign Briana Wildemann, USN was on the Gunston Hall, which immediately approached Port-au-Prince after the disaster, and participated in the early relief effort. Briana was able to organize assistance for the sisters, providing Sisters Christiane and Yannick with a vehicle full of key medical supplies as well as 80 bags of rice.

Food came to them from Guadeloupe—food to distribute to the homeless around them. The sisters shared the food with the other religious congregations in the area. They also began providing approximately 1500 daily food packets for families living in the refugee camp situated on their property near the convent in Port-au-Prince. They also took in about 40 relatives of their coworkers who depend on them for three meals a day.

Then, in March, the food ran out. The new shipment from Guadeloupe has been inexplicably delayed. Yet, no one who



**Sister Marie Bernadette Vercela during break time with the girls in their “tent school”.**

comes for help is turned away. The sisters continue to give, out of their need, some help to each person who asks.

The clinics now function under tents as the rains fall. Medical Missionaries of Mary from Ireland have joined our sisters to care for the sick and injured. They will remain until August.

With school buildings condemned, classes have resumed in tents. High school classes meet in the morning, elementary in the afternoon. Donations from Ireland will provide a daily meal for students until June: 200 in Port-au-Prince; 100 in Jacmel; and 100 in Petionville. The sisters spend much time with the students, consoling them and problem solving, for they come with heavy hearts, mourning family members, sometimes having no where to turn.

Demolition and the removal of rubble goes slowly for many reasons: the precariousness of the rubble; shortage of labor and equipment; lack of space in which to maneuver; and soaring rates. The sisters must appeal to organizations to fund the demolition and removal process so that the sites may be secured and readied for rebuilding.

The sisters work under the most difficult conditions, surrounded by reminders of the tragedy. It is a long road from death to new life—to renewing and rebuilding on every level. They continue to live out of doors like countless other homeless Haitians. The rains have come and will continue for some time, further hampering their efforts to recover and to serve others.

Nevertheless, the sisters do not lose hope, believing that the darkness of their Good Friday experience will yield to resurrection. They carry on, desiring, like our Founder, Blessed Anne Marie, to “do a little bit of good”. Their witness alone is enormous – it is no “little bit” for their people, nor for us who stand in solidarity with them and reach out to help.

**To see how you can help, turn to page 6.**



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## Will You Help Rebuild Cluny in Haïti?

**O**ur Haïtian sisters have expressed again and again their gratitude for all the assistance that has come to them through our Affiliates, Associates, friends, families, Cluny School and other collaborators here in the Province of USA and Canada, and they assure us that we are all in their prayers.

Photos of the sisters, the Mass of Thanksgiving at Sainte Rose in Port-au-Prince, and classes resuming in the UNICEF tents may be viewed via links at <http://www.sjc.ie>.

Please join us in helping the sisters to rebuild their vital ministries:

Health care

Education

Social Services

You can make an online donation at: [www.clunyusandcanada.org](http://www.clunyusandcanada.org), by clicking on *Share our Mission*, and then on *Rebuilding Cluny in Haïti*.

You may also send a check to:

Cluny Sisters  
Rebuild Cluny in Haïti Appeal  
PO Box 66  
Newport, RI 02840-0066

Read the update on Cluny Sisters in Haïti on page 5.

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