

## A Cluny Affiliate Reflects on the Charism

Rhode Island Cluny Affiliate Louise Costley

When asked to consider writing this article for Cluny Connections, my first thought was what do I know about writing? A Christmas newsletter isn't exactly Nobel Prize material! However, hoping to broaden my horizons, I agreed!

Entering my daughter in the Cluny Sisters' School in Newport, RI was my first experience with the Cluny Sisters. I was ushered into the office by the principal, Sister Carmel. My first impression was "WOW! Someone shorter than me!" Thus began a relationship of over forty years with the Cluny community.

The story of Blessed Anne-Marie Javouhey, her life's work, and her mission with the poor quickly became an integral part of my life. I learned of the sister's work in numerous areas of the world. I grew to understand their mission to challenge poverty, disease, and lack of education.

My main challenge, however, was the school. One of the sisters' missions was finding volunteers for the school! I soon became involved with the Cluny Fair, selling tickets, building booths, etc... In addition, I worked in the school library and poured tea at Open House and did dishes, dishes and more dishes. I even taped windows in preparation for a hurricane! And so, I became a part of the Cluny community.

I soon learned that for me the charism of the sisters was the day-to-day effort of keeping the school open and challenging the students to become more than just



Louise Costley

"students". Our children learned respect, kindness, sharing, and caring about each other. They learned that Jesus was our brother and he loved us no matter what. I was constantly reminded of that also.

During those years, I watched the sisters as they worked in the local parish teaching CCD, helping one another with tasks at the school, becoming a part of the local community by helping those in need and by praying with those whose spirit was broken. This was the path taught to them by Blessed Anne-Marie. The sisters showed me this path, the same path that Jesus asked us to follow.

Following that path doesn't mean you have to do heroic things. It can be as simple as hugging a child with a splinter who is in pain, giving someone a ride

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## From the Editor's Desk

Cluny Connections wishes each of you a very Happy Easter Season! May you be blessed with Life and Hope and deep Joy! As I write this, springtime crocuses, snowdrops and daffodils are chasing away the drab grey of winter and the birds join in our Morning Prayer again! New Life! May it stir in us the Hope Easter brings each year, challenging us to do the works of justice and mercy that will transform swords into plowshares, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, free the trafficked and instruct the ignorant.

This issue brings you stories about Cluny's attempts to do just that in North America and beyond. The efforts of our province to reach beyond ourselves is described in The Circle of Love. Zoe Clougher, a grade 7 student at Cluny School, our sponsored work in Newport, R. I., tells us about the drama club's delightful presentation of Dear Edwina, while Louise Costley's piece about her many years as a volunteer and secretary at Cluny School proves that no group can do without its faithful volunteer collaborators. Sister Maria Nita, Regional

Leader in Seychelles/Tanzania writes about the immense challenge of providing health care in a very poor region in Tanzania with few means to support them. This issue also remembers Sr. Rose Roffelsen and Mary Gagne, women of faith in the promises of baptism that whoever believes will have eternal life. May they rest in the fulfillment of that faith!

We ask you to remember the people of Mali, West Africa and our Sisters who work there. Although the leader of Mali's recent coup announced that he and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have agreed to a plan which will hand over power to the civilian government in exchange for the end of trade and diplomatic sanctions, unrest continues in Mali.

And finally, we ask for your prayerful support as Cluny Sisters from all over the world gather in Paris on May 27 to enter into a period of prayer and retreat before beginning three weeks of deliberations which will provide direction to our international congregation for the next six years.

Sister Regina Brunelle

### An Affiliate Reflects on the Charism (Continued)

to the dentist when they have no transportation, sitting by the bedside of a sick friend, baking cookies for an 8th grade fund-raiser (buying them too!). All these things are simple prayers. The lesson that the sisters have taught me through their charism is that sometimes an ordinary person can do extraordinary things with just a smile, a handshake, a hug or a simple prayer.

Over the years I have prayed with my sisters many times in sorrow, in joy, in laughter and in hope. When my eyes close for the last time I hope that my God will know I tried my best and my sisters will be praying me home asking God not to give me any more dishes!

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# Creating a Circle of Love

Sister Luke Parker



**I**t is the springtime of creation; the earth pulsates with God's 'greening power' re-birthing and renewing life. In Baptism and in response to a deeply personal call from Christ, we have been plunged into this power and life of God revealed in Christ and his mission. We participate in his mission today as together we expand the revelation of God's love for peoples everywhere, as we bring hope and compassion to an anguished world, and as we respond to the needs of the poor and most vulnerable in our midst.

In our homes and communities, in our good works and sharing of our time, talent and resources and in our collaboration with others: organizations, religious groups, non-profits, civic and global community projects, we are always engaged in proclaiming the Good News of justice, dignity, love, reconciliation and peace, establishing the Kingdom of God here below.

Recently our Province asked ourselves the questions: How do we, Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in the Province of USA & Canada continue the mission of Jesus? How do we, in our reality, place our corporate resources, talents and time in service? In response to this challenge we initiated a Province "Circle of Love", embracing local projects and serving those in need where we live and minister.

Those with whom we collaborate include:

#### *In Rhode Island*

Cluny School: a sponsored work of our Province that provides Catholic Education for children.

Sophia Academy: educating girls at risk.

Wisdom's Way: providing educational scholarships for women needing financial assistance.

Lucy's Hearth: a shelter for homeless women and their children.

#### *In West Virginia*

Whitesville Food Pantry, where our sisters previously ministered.

#### *In Southern California*

Sts. Peter & Paul Poverty Program: begun by our sisters and continued by the parish in Wilmington.

Mary Star of the Sea Christian Care serving the poor in San Pedro.

Safe House for Trafficked Women, Los Angeles.

#### *In Hamilton, Ontario, Canada:*

Good Shepherd Ministries, providing food, shelter, clothing, and other vital services for homeless and vulnerable peoples.

Portuguese Support Services Quality Living, a non-profit organization committed to providing a better quality of life to individuals with disabilities.

#### *Globally*

We collaborate as a sponsored member of the "Stop Trafficking Newsletter" that provides information to combat human trafficking.

"Let us go to wherever there is a little good to be done." (Anne Marie Javouhey)  
 "Let the good in me connect with the good in others, until the entire world is transformed through the compelling power of love." (Rebbe Nachman) It is this spirit of going beyond ourselves and connecting with others that places us at the heart of Christ's mission today. May each of you in this springtime of power and renewed life take the seed of discipleship and creatively love and serve in your local areas, expanding circles of love in your families, communities, workplaces and world.

#### Websites

[www.clunyschool.org](http://www.clunyschool.org)  
[www.sophia-academy.org](http://www.sophia-academy.org)  
[www.lucyshearth.org](http://www.lucyshearth.org)  
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## In Memoriam



**Sister Rose Roffelsen**  
**A Rose from Indiana**

**B**orn in Fort Wayne, Indiana on August 26, 1920, Anna Roffelsen came to Newport for her entrance interview sometime in August, 1952. Her laugh was as genuine as she herself, even when she fell down the three steps leading into the chapel while she reassured the very concerned novice who was giving her a tour of the novitiate, “It’s all right! I’m just falling for the Lord!” Anna returned to Mary Immaculate Queen Novitiate on October 3, 1953 and never looked back.

Legally blind, she was educated at St. Joseph School for the Blind in New Jersey, then went on to earn a B.A. in social work from Marian University in Indianapolis. After graduation, she moved to New York where she was associated with Xavier Society for the Blind. For years, she confidently traveled the New York subways as she went about the business of everyday life. Anna remained a life-long supporter of the XSB and joined the Canadian Society for the Blind as well when she was transferred to Hamilton, Ontario in 1986.

Sr. Rose made first vows on August 22, 1956. Her first assignment was to Stella Maris in Newport where she regaled the elderly residents with her ‘corny’ jokes, hearty laughter, and sense of fun. Rose was a baker’s daughter. Among the many things we will remember about her are her sweet tooth, (“Three for the Trinity” always accompanied her taking three chocolates from the box!), the puns that always brought groans from us all, and the motorcycle ride she took down Brenton Road to Village House one day when her ride failed to appear!

In 1961 she was transferred to Cluny Convent, Newport where she gave private lessons in piano and taught music and history at Cluny School. The compassion learned from her own struggles dealing with the limitations of blindness was evident during the five years she visited the sick and the elderly at Village House in Newport, a ministry she continued at Versa Care in Hamilton, Ontario for seventeen years when she was missioned there in 1986.

Sr. Rose was gifted with a magnificent trained voice and she loved to sing even when the song was poking fun at her! We fondly remember her big grin whenever she sang, “I’m a Rose from Indiana” written by another novice for a celebration in honor of the formation director. She sang in St. Augustin’s Parish Choir and even formed a special choir there to sing at funerals. She sang in a senior choir in Hamilton that brought joy to so many in the city’s nursing homes. During the last seven years of her life, she sang after Communion during morning Mass at St. Clare’s Home. When Rosie stopped singing, we knew her heart was already turned towards that place where she would never stop singing again. On February 21, 2012, a new song undoubtedly burst forth from her lips as she finally entered into the Presence of the God she had longed for, often chided, served and loved so well!



**Affiliate Mary Gagne**

**M**ary Gagne’s “place” was prepared and on January 29, 2012 at 5:00 AM Jesus came to take her home. Mary was ready. She had lived 78 years, a full and happy life. She had made her home here, in the Fifth Ward in Newport, with her beloved husband Paul for the past 58 years. Mary loved life and enjoyed many friends during her lifetime. She did have her share of the cross to carry, suffering ill health for over twenty years until her final illness. Mary was in Newport Hospital and diagnosed with pneumonia. When her options were explained to her Mary chose to wait on God’s call and prepared herself and her family for this final journey. Receiving the Sacrament of the Sick, Mary participated fully and seemed very happy to be ready for the road. She was at peace and was accompanied each day on her journey by Paul and her family.

For many months Mary could not get to her beloved church, but Paul took her Eucharist from each Mass that he attended. This brought her real comfort, as her faith was alive and well. Her two daughters, her sons-in-law, her four grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and her sisters brought her much support, consolation and joy. During her final days, they took turns being her companion while her faithful Paul never left her side.

Paul and Mary were Cluny Affiliates for many years and worked with us on many different projects. It is with a certain sadness that we bid farewell to Mary who was always so ready to take phone calls from us and to send us the help needed. May her gentle soul rest in peace. We are better for having known her.

*Cluny Affiliates are lay persons who have been granted spiritual affiliation by the congregation in recognition of their long-term friendship and support. They share in all the spiritual benefits of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in life and in death.*



## Cluny in Tabora, Tanzania

Sister Mary Nita Servina  
Leader of the Vice Province of Seychelles/Tanzania

**T**he Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny now have two communities in Tanzania in the Archdiocese of Tabora. Our presence in Mwanzugi dates since 1998; the second community in Tabora Municipality was opened in 2003. The community in Mwanzugi was established primarily to care for the sick in a dispensary started by the Igunga Parish Council in 1996 in buildings not meant for that purpose. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny took over running the clinic under very difficult conditions and have been doing so for the past fourteen years.

### Location

Mwanzugi Dispensary and Maternal and Child Health Care Clinic are located in the village of Mwanzugi within the District and Catholic Parish of Igunga, in the Archdiocese of Tabora in the Tabora region. It is 9 kilometres from the District Town of Igunga. The Regional town of Tabora is 208 kilometres away.

### Establishment

The Dispensary and Maternal and Child Health Care Clinic were established in 1996 and came into full operation in 1997 with a minimal staff of six lay people: a Clinical Assistant, a Nurse-Midwife and four Nursing Assistants. Since then, we have had to increase the staff to meet the requirements of Public Health, the increasing number of patients and the offering of round the clock services. Thanks to the large numbers coming to the dispensary, the existing number of treatment rooms is now woefully insufficient. We need to build a bigger clinic to accommodate the influx of patients as well as to provide privacy and proper ventilation. The existing wards can accommodate only fifteen patients and four maternity cases at a time. The

clinic delivers from 500 to 600 babies a year. Many more mothers come with complications from abortions, retained placentas after home deliveries and postpartum anaemia.

### Populations

According to the local government census figures released last year, the population of Mwanzugi area is 3,563 with a population growth rate of 2.4% per annum. Our clinic also serves many villages surrounding Mwanzugi, such as Mwalala, Nguvumoja, Mwanshoma, Ipumbulya, Itumba, Bukoko, Mgazi, and Migelele as well as villages from the neighboring region of Singida.

The dispensary treats more than 6,000 patients a year and admits 950 as inpatients. These figures increase every year. Not only do we have patients coming from the Mwanzugi itself but, thanks to the clinic's reputation, many come from villages of districts bordering the District of Igunga. Since we have begun testing for HIV/AIDS and providing other basic laboratory services, pre-natal care has also increased. This increase in numbers has made it essential to improve and expand the existing buildings to provide for the needs of the people. The work has begun but funds ran out before the new Mother and Child Clinic could be completed.

### Economy

Survival in the area depends mostly on livestock and subsistence farming. Cash crops such as cotton are at a minimum. Since it rains only five months of the year in this region, many livestock farmers are migrants constantly on the move in search of new pastures. About 60% of the population live below poverty level generally estimated at US \$251 GDP. The majority of the poor are women who

## Seychelles/Tanzania Vice-Province

*Cluny first arrived in Seychelles in February 1861. Since then, 241 sisters from France, Reunion, Ireland, Madagascar, Trinidad, Mauritius, India and native Seychellois have served the mission. In 1998, the Seychelles expanded its mission to Tanzania. Today, there are seventeen sisters in four communities serving in the Seychelles and seven sisters in the two communities in Tanzania.*

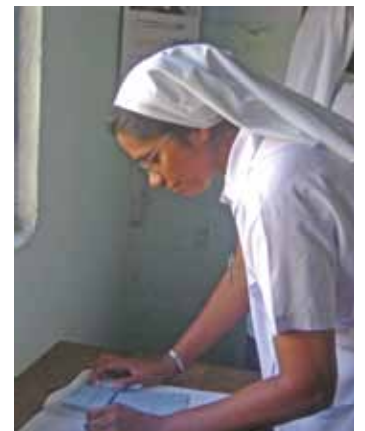
*Health care and pastoral and social outreach to the poor children at Village President and to those addicted to alcohol/drugs are the major ministries in the Seychelles. Some sisters teach catechism in the schools and parishes. Others are engaged in active listening at La Domus and in counseling and pastoral visits to the sick in hospitals and at home.*



**Mother and child at the clinic.**

survive on less than one dollar per day. It is really a hand to mouth economy and some can hardly manage the medical expenses. That is why we came to Tanzania and why we try to provide affordable quality health care to the people of this area.

We dream of the day that the new Mother and Child Clinic is completed so that we can improve on the existing facilities to provide better service to the people. For this to happen, we are forced to depend on the generosity of benefactors.



**Sister Christina, the first Tanzanian Cluny, and soon to be a certified nurse-midwife**



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## *Bringing Hope & Compassion*

### Cluny School Musical a Success Our Most Beautiful, Wonderful Dear Edwina...

Zoe Clougher

What do pigs, singing napkins, good manners and true love have in common? They are all part of the delightful musical Dear Edwina that was recently performed at Cluny School. Music and drama teacher, Mrs. Bernard directed this wonderful play. Seventh grader Emma Rainer brought to life the character of advice columnist Edwina Spoonapple. Throughout the performance Edwina's advice to her readers was acted out with humor, spunk, and love. The song "Put it in the Piggy" had the audience laughing out loud. Nick Klassner stole the show with his performance of love for Edwina as Scott. Hopefully, their relationship will work out for them. Great costumes, awesome props, and amazing performance.

GREAT JOB EVERYONE!!

(Story and photo reprinted from *Cluny Chronicle*, the Cluny School student newsletter. Used with permission.)



**Nick Klassner and Emma Rainer**

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