

He Is Not Here, He is Risen!



A Special Easter Message for You

As we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ, we bring you a newsletter with stories of dying and rising to new life. The bible study could have died, but it went on line within a week. Cluny Sisters left China in 1870, but we now have three Chinese Clunys. We have grieved the closing of Cluny School almost three years ago, but we rejoice in Sophia Academy's success.

We hold all of you and all the world in prayer during these difficult and sad times of the Covid-19 pandemic. We trust in the Risen Lord to continue to reveal the path from suffering and death to new life.

Each day we hold you in prayer, that you and all your loved ones may have a felt sense of His presence, and receive all the strength, courage and consolation you need today and each day.

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Thanks to Our Donors
Carrying on our Mission
in Difficult Times

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Thank you.

Well, a lot of things have happened since last I wrote an introduction to the newsletter! It is hard to believe that we're in the midst of a pandemic! A few months ago we were all thinking of politics or wishing politics would go away, saddened over the fires devastating Australia, concerned with the floods and tornadoes, blizzards and avalanches in other parts of the country...maybe looking over the stock market prices, or wondering if Tom Brady would really leave New England and play for another team. How can the world change so quickly? So drastically, in fact. One small, indiscernible microbe, in a part of the world we probably couldn't find on the map, has changed our lives.

And with it, all our science and technology, our superiority in weaponry, our Gross National Product, even our humble existence is left swinging in the breeze like the last of the maple leaves to fall in the wind. Like the Breton fisherman alone in his little boat, we have to say "Lord, help! Your ocean is so vast and my boat so small."

Sister Anne Marie

"But Jesus immediately said to them:
Take courage! It is I.
Don't be afraid."

(Matthew 14:27)



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Javouhey House Bible Study Goes Online

Sister Marie Cooper

In early 2019 Mary Durgin approached me asking whether there was “something available for adults”. Within a week, she had a group of interested parishioners from St. Augustin and St. Mary parishes gathered. Quickly they decided to meet on Tuesdays at Javouhey House in Newport, RI after the 7:30 Mass, to focus on the Gospel of Luke, since we were in Cycle C of the Lectionary.

Our weekly meetings continued until we were no longer able to meet in person. All the members bravely accepted the challenges of an online meeting, and were patient through the glitches that often accompany trying something new.

Here are their reflections on the experience:

What a great idea to use Zoom to keep our group together at this time. It feels like we lost everything. Having our Scripture group helps to put the focus on the most important part of Holy Week. We can continue to celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the redemption of man. My world is too full of material things. It is difficult to concentrate; I need the contact with a group like ours. Mary Moniz

I found it so wonderful to be able to be with a group who was trying to stay together. There was joy on everyone’s face as they saw each other and knew that we could try to see the higher purpose in life and share our faith. Thank you. Joan Galvin

At a time when we can’t receive the sacraments, visit family and friends, even have friendly exchange with a passing stranger ... I feel blessed that our scripture group can still meet (all thanks to you)! From the start, it has been special to meet weekly with such a wonderful group of women, but since the Corona virus has turned our lives topsy turvy, it has been a godsend. Linda Knowles

I enjoyed being a member of the Bible Study with Sister Marie Cooper before the pandemic, but since we are now all home bound, coming together through Zoom has been wonderful. It is very uplifting to meet each week and have the support of one another as we pray the Scriptures. Molly McGregor

A little over a year ago, I was in a spiritual desert. Knowing this is not always a bad thing, as the Lord



Bible Study members online. Top row: Mary Durgin, Sisters Rachel and Marie, Mary Moniz. Second Row: Angela Healey, Linda Knowles, Molly McGregor. Third row: Joan Galvin.

will not leave you orphaned, it became a time for listening, but it also created a yearning for more. The “more” for me was our scripture group. Better understanding of Scripture has always been a driving force in my spiritual journey, so meeting every week with a group of wonderful women of faith to share Scripture has been a tremendous, life giving blessing. The Cluny Sisters Marie and Rachel have graced our group, and even during this pandemic, the gift of technology has allowed us to meet. I treasure my sisters-in-faith and would be lost without them, for the Word of God becomes more precious when shared. Mary Durgin

May I simply say that being a part of the bible study group has meant so much to me. I feel blessed to be included. During this time of such sadness our virtual meetings have made my week. History has had many plagues, but this one has come at a time when I suspect we were at a point where we thought we could conquer anything. We can, if we stay together. Togetherness is what I feel on Tuesday mornings. We can always start anew and perhaps see a better new world. My prayers and love to all the Cluny Sisters. May we all have a blessed Easter. Angela Healey

I am grateful to be with the bible study group in sharing our open and faithfuller thoughts on the Gospel reading. Sister Rachel Philippe Racine

Thank you all for all you bring to our gatherings each week. I look forward to seeing you and sharing each week, too!

Chinese Cluny Sisters Share Their Stories

Sister Anne Marie Liston

Membership in an international congregation of missionaries opens up possibilities that never occurred to me when I was first thinking of religious life. I never dreamed there were so many different communities around the world in so many different countries. Cluny Sisters are present in more countries than I can name. There are countries where we once had

foundations, but had to leave. In the 1800s, Cluny Sisters from France made a foundation in mainland China, but had to withdraw after a few years. Their story is told in Cluny Around the World on Page 6. Today we are blessed to have three Chinese women who have joined our congregation. Here are their stories.

Sister Pacifica Sun

Sister Pacifica Sun Chunmin was born in a small village near Beijing to a faithful Catholic family. She was baptized by her aunt and practiced her faith secretly during the Cultural Revolution.



Sister Pacifica on the day of her profession of vows: 2011

In the nineteen eighties many of the elderly priests who had been imprisoned were released and the Catholics could celebrate Eucharist secretly. As Pacifica matured she realized one of her childhood dreams to become a doctor.

Still, her dream remained incomplete, and making the acquaintance of an international Chinese Congregation, she entered their community. At first Pacifica seemed to have realized her dream, but she eventually discerned that she was not in the place God meant for her. She left that congregation to continue her search. The Spirit touched her in the person of a Buddhist friend who introduced her to two Cluny Sisters, who joined her for lunch at his invitation.

Sister Pacifica, our first professed sister from China, has been with Cluny for 13 years now. She mentions often the impact which our motto, the Holy Will of God, has had in her life and knows that it is a driving force among Clunys. She says, "I am so happy and proud to be a Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny, following our Mother foundress Anne-Marie Javouhey in serving needy people." In recalling her story and that of the Cluny novices, Sisters Rose and Augustina, she seems to have yet another dream, "Maybe in the future we will work together and take our Mother Foundress' charism to China."

Sister Rose

Sister Rose Lyu, a novice in her second year of formation, comes from the region of He Bei, south of Beijing. Rose was the third child in a devout Catholic family. As she was growing up she saw the sufferings experienced by her parents and her closest relatives because of the Cultural Revolution. As she matured, the witness of their faith and struggle influenced her own faith and made it stronger. This sense of God's presence with her no matter what might happen in her life was a steady guide even in an environment where her deepest beliefs were challenged.

Rose was also influenced by the women religious who came to her parish during school vacation time to teach the children. Their kindness made a deep impression upon her. Supported by her parents and family she left home at nineteen to join a religious congregation in the Philippines. During her short sojourn there, Rose realized that she was not called to that congregation. Returning to help her parents in China, she worked for a few years to gain experience. Those were years of ups and downs. But she was buoyed by a deep sense of the presence of Christ through it all. A few years later she got in touch with Pacifica, an old friend, with whom she had lost contact. They had a long chat, and Rose was intrigued by the introduction of Cluny into her quest. Rose was deeply moved by what she learned about the Cluny charism and the writings of our foundress.

Rose says, "With their support and a big sacrifice from my family, I joined Cluny. They are very happy and grateful to God for my vocation...I have found inner peace and joy in Christ...I desire to follow in the footsteps of Blessed Anne Marie, 'to love His children in humility, regardless of race.'"

As someone once said, it isn't like 'one size fits all' but more of 'the right church and in the right pew.'



Photos: Sister Pacifica Sun Chummin

Back row:
Bishop Patrick
Dunn with
Sister Pacifica.
Front row:
Novices, Sisters
Augustina and
Rose.

Sister Augustina

Sister Augustina, also a novice in her second year of formation, says, “A call to be a religious is a precious grace of God. God called me by my name. This is my vocation.”

Augustina entered a religious congregation, but at the time she decided to leave, a friend introduced her to Sister Pacifica. The spirituality of Blessed Anne Marie interested her greatly.

She entered the Cluny novitiate in Fiji in May, 2017, and is very happy to be a Cluny novice.

Sister Augustina says that Blessed Anne-Marie’s spirituality and example are her guides, and it was not difficult for her to see these qualities in the sisters who touched her life. She says, “I experienced how totally they give their lives to God. Their gentle words and simple actions were to be seen in ‘doing a little good’ in imitation of Anne-Marie. I also experienced the simple life style the sisters lived, and how they respected the poor. I was very much impressed with the way their prayer life and mission works were well balanced. That is why they can give themselves freely and respond with generosity of heart to all.”

Augustina also says that she is truly grateful for her formation journey, and feels that God has cherished her and accompanies her through the sisters, especially her formator, Sr. Luisiana. She says she is grateful that she was allowed to make mistakes, and was given time and space to grow.

She expresses how the sisters have journeyed with her in the words of Ezekiel 24: “I will look for the last one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded, and make the weak strong. I will watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them.”

Thank you, Sisters, Pacifica, Rose and Augustina for sharing your stories with us. You will be remembered in our daily prayers as you continue on your way.

Cluny Circle of Love: News from Sophia Academy

Cluny Sisters were blessed to be able to join the collaborative of religious congregations in Rhode Island to found Sophia Academy in inner-city Providence, and to support this wonderful inner-city middle school for girls through our Cluny Circle of Love. We continue to be proud of Sophia Academy, which responds so well to immediate and long term student needs. We’d like to share excerpts from a recent communication from Maura Farrell, the Head of School.

Here at Sophia, with creativity, energy, and teamwork, we transitioned to an entirely virtual school in one week. I’ve never been more proud or honored to work with a team of people in my career. Every faculty and staff member is focused on providing our students with the same relational approach and quality of curriculum we offer in our building. For some teachers, this work is complicated by the fact that they are home with their own children. For others, technology is a new realm, and they have had not only to rapidly reconceive curriculum, but also learn new ways to work, communicate, and teach.

Our family support team is reaching out regularly to parents and building a Google Classroom student support “office.” Our COVID-19 web page provides information for parents about online school as well as resources they can access if they are affected by the economic fallout of this crisis; so far, about half of our families are reporting employment losses. We have helped families get free internet access if they needed it, and loaned out about 25 Chromebooks to students who needed them to participate in classes.

Sophia Academy was born out of an abundance of hope and a commitment to community, values that are more important now than ever. We are humbled by the love you have shown our students and families through your support, volunteer work, partnership, and leadership. With you standing behind us and cheering our girls on, rest assured that Sophia Academy continues to challenge our students to dream big, work hard, and reflect their wisdom into the world. Thank you for being a part of our community.

For photos and more, visit the Sophia Academy site:
<https://www.sophia-academy.org/>



Looking Back: Cluny Sisters in China

Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell—Province of New Zealand/Philippines
and Sister Gertrude Tang Kai—Province of the West Indies

In 2005, Sisters Elizabeth and Gertrude visited the area on mainland China where Cluny Sisters had ministered during the 19th Century, We are grateful to them for the photos and their commentary used for this article.

It is an awesome feeling to go back in time and to walk on ground sacred to the memory of our forebears in the Congregation who came to China more than one hundred years ago. As we stepped out of our taxi on Yide Lu Avenue, in Guangzhou, China, we could hardly contain our excitement and sense of wonder and of history. We were really here at last!

Encouraged by friends and associates of the Holy Childhood Society, founded by Pauline Jaricot, the Congregation offered some sisters to that society to work with children in China. This foundation was made on the 19th of October, 1866, near to the French Territory. Here was the actual place where French Sisters Isidore Dubois, Celestine Bernard, Zoë Ducey and Césarine Cavaignac* arrived to work in a crèche for abandoned children and in an orphanage close by. The Sisters assumed the direction of the Girls' Orphanage, keeping with them Chinese Sister A-tang who had been running the orphanage on her own. The Superior General at that time was Mother Rosalie Javouhey, sister of Blessed Anne Marie. In 1864, the orphanage was relocated to Pak-mai-hong Street.

Our guide for the day was Sr Lucia, a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, with whom we had stayed in Hong Kong. Sr Lucia travelled with us from Hong Kong to Guangzhou to lead us to the place where our Sisters had been. Her Sisters had come to Guangzhou in 1909 to take over the orphanage from the Catechists de Marie Immaculée of Lyons. Sister Lucia introduced us to the young and hospitable Sister Teresa Houangqujiao, the Mother General of the Chinese Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

Around the corner was, we were told, possibly our street! – Pak MaiHong. Short of wanting to kiss the ground (!!) which was of course narrow, old and dirty, we walked contemplatively along the alleyway paved with stones, remembering our past, wondering how life might have been then. On our right was the site of a previous orphanage (ours?) It was eventually turned into a school.



Photos: Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell

L-R: Sister Gertrude, Sister Teresa Houangqujiao, Mother General of the Chinese Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and Sister Elizabeth

Now the old school was being demolished to make way for a new one.

The sisters' work was interrupted by disturbing events. The Britannica Macropedia contains the following article: "Tientsin" that notes: "Economic prosperity declined temporarily during the mid-19th century when the European nations trading with China unremittingly pressed their demands for commercial and diplomatic concessions. The Treaty of Tientsin, which ended the second Anglo-French War (1856-58) against China, was signed by the British, French and Chinese in 1858. Hostilities were resumed in Tientsin in 1860, and the city was shelled by the British and French. The Convention of Peking then declared Tientsin an open trading port. Ten years later, a violent expression of anti-foreign feeling erupted in the city and the French Catholic orphanage and cathedral were attacked." (Britannica Macropedia, Ed. "Tientsin", Pg.... 395) During the 1870 revolt in TienTsin nine Sisters were assassinated.

Mother Marie Olympe was sent to China by the General Council in 1869 to investigate the situation of our Sisters. She wrote the following letter from Hong Kong to the French Consul in Canton (Guangzhou in the Guangdong Province) on 07 August 1870, "Sir, seeing that our position here in Guangzhou is very precarious, and since we cannot foresee how long we will be here away from our mission, we

Looking Back: Cluny Sisters in China (Con't)



Photos: Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell

Sisters Elizabeth and Gertrude on Pak MaiHong Street

have arranged to return to France by the steamer which leaves on the 11 inst." All the Cluny Sisters safely departed for France.

Our visit to our roots in China remains a very special part of our "epic week". We spent 3 days and 3 nights in Guangzhou walking for miles, exploring all the famous places (The Chen Clan Temple, the Buddhist Monastery of the 6 Banyans, The Sun Yat Sen Memorial). We went back twice to "our place" down by the Pearl River to savor the streets, the architecture, the life, to remember and to give thanks.

We felt privileged to have been able to retrace the steps of our first missionaries to China. We left Jiangmen feeling that we had indeed found kindred spirits among the friendly religious who hosted us.

At the time of this visit in 2005, we could not have imagined that one day Chinese women would enter our congregation. We rejoice in the gift of their presence among us!

**Sister Césarine Cavaignac returned to France from China after 18 months because of illness, but she was to distinguish herself as a nurse and director of a succession of small pox quarantine wards in St. Pierre and Miquelon. She also saved the lives of many shipwrecked sailors on its shores, sometimes carrying them on her back to safety, and nursing them back to health. The government of France awarded her two first class gold medals, three awards with silver medals, and the highest honor of all, the Knight's Cross of the Legion of Honor.*



*I was hungry, thirsty, sick, in prison . . .
when you did it for my sisters and brothers,
you did it for me. (Jesus)*

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"You'll never know the difference you made in my life," so many people tell us.

*During these difficult times, to
continue our outreach, it is even more
important for us to meet our goal of
\$50,000 for 2020.*

You've read how much it means to the members of our Bible Study in Newport to meet weekly. We also continue to reach out to those in need through food and meal distribution and in other ways.

**Please consider making a contribution today—
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Bringing Hope & Compassion

ALERT!

Cluny Connections Is Becoming Primarily an Electronic Publication

**Beginning with the Fall 2020 issue, a subscription to the print edition
will only be available on request.**

Moving to an electronic version will allow us to communicate with you more often and send you more news about Cluny Sisters here and around the world. As paper stock and postage continues to increase in cost, cutting back on printing will also allow us to redirect the savings toward ministry needs.

However, we will provide a print edition to anyone who requires it.

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