

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

Connections

Be with Me, Lord

Sister Eugenia Brady

“Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord,” (Ps. 4:6b) for “Pain, like a sword plunges through creation,” (Evelyn Underhill), and we are in darkness. But “The night will give you a horizon/ further than you can see,” says the poet David Whyte.

The world community, especially our own country, is suffering from darkness as we confront a failed global economy. Families and individuals are experiencing a sense of wandering and groping in the wilderness of fear and anger. How complacent so many of us were as we enjoyed years of prosperity and riches! Reality has caught up with us and the “dark night” has come. What is there to fill the void? What can hold our hearts in faith, hope and love?

In recent decades, a hunger for spirituality

has led to ventures into neo-paganism in the form of New Age beliefs. While Christianity is spreading in Africa, many splinter groups are arising in more evangelized areas - some more fundamentalist in nature, others that more loosely interpret the Good News of Jesus Christ. Where is there a center to hold our hearts?

Many say, “I am spiritual but not religious,” explaining how easy it is to find God outside the walls of established religion. Yes, God is present everywhere, and nothing would exist without that Presence. It is a wonderful gift to practice the presence of God, but we humans need community to help renew our hope and trust.

God has also given us inner senses by which we can touch the Divine in a more intimate way.

We often do not want to go to the inner sacred space where God is most present. We fear what we will find, or what God will ask of us if we get too close. Yet it is in the solitude we will find our true selves and learn how much God loves us, and how we can develop a good, healthy love of self.

God is the answer to our loneliness, our inner and outer restlessness. Many doors in our lives are closed through fear and grief. Jesus tells us, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest.” (Mt. 11:28) Yes, our refreshment is to be found in a renewed hope in God who will never leave us alone.

Mercy, we are told is God’s greatest attribute, mercy founded in love. St. John reminds us, “See what love the Father has

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Sister Mary Patrice Watson

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Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny
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Editor: Mary Patrice Watson, SJC
clunywatson@hotmail.com

20955 Halldale Avenue
Torrance CA 90501

Phone: (310) 328-1807

Layout: Marie Cooper, SJC
clunymarie@myway.com

857 North Avenue West
Westfield, NJ 07090
Phone: (908) 728-0090

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On the Move

Sister Regina Brunelle
Angela's Place
320 Tragina Avenue North
Hamilton Ontario L8H 5E2
CANADA

Email: lois_brunelle@yahoo.com

(New phone number will follow.)

On the afternoon of February 19, 2009, Sister Teresa Kenny stopped by the Plummer residence to spend some time with Larry. He had recently been diagnosed with cancer and was rapidly losing ground. She arrived just in time to help him 'let go' and peacefully move into God's eternal, loving embrace. Perhaps the spirit of his wife, Peg, had something to do with that, for she was never far from Larry's mind and heart. They had been married fifty-five years before she died last year. There must have been great rejoicing as they once again came together in LOVE.

Larry was born on March 16, 1925 in Wathena, Kansas where he lived until the early 1950s. During WW II he bravely served our country as a member of the United States Navy. He was the only surviving member of his platoon during the Battle of

Guadalcanal, and received the Purple Heart for the injuries that he suffered.

After he and Peg left Kansas and moved to southern California, they took up residence in St. Catherine Laboure parish, Torrance, where they raised their two children. One of their annual projects during the 1960s was to set up the parish nativity scene on a prominent street corner. This continued until the city was forced to ban religious displays. Through the years, it was obvious that Larry took his commitment to the parish very seriously.

He was also very committed to his job. Indeed, as a result of airline mergers, etc, Larry chalked up an incredible employment record. He worked for seven airlines over forty years without ever leaving his job. The last one that

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Cluny Sisters Withdraw from Providence Cathedral

Sister Genevieve-Marie Vigil

A Mass of thanksgiving brought to a close our 56 years of service at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral rectory in Providence, Rhode Island. On the cold, snowy morning of January 18th, clergy, parishioners and friends



Sisters who served in the Providence Community: (left to right) Sisters Gerard Grogan, Immaculata Murphy, Joseph Edwards, Aine Power and Angela O'Callaghan

braved the elements to gather in the Cathedral, to celebrate Mass for the sisters who lived, worked and ministered there. Bishop Louis E. Gelineau was both homilist and main celebrant. He shared memories of the sisters and their impact on all whom they encountered:

"These Sisters at the Cathedral possess God in a unique and powerful way. Everything they did and said and portrayed demonstrated they had God with them. They were happy. They were fulfilled in their vocations. They shared a grace on how to be disciples of Jesus and to glory in it... We will express our (gratitude) always in trying to be good disciples of Jesus as they have shown us how."

Though his words were based on the experience of sharing community with the sisters for 33 years, it was Bishop Russell J. McVinney who first brought Cluny there. In 1952 he approached our provincial to ask for the establishment of a community in the Cathedral

rectory and in exchange he would enable them to establish a novitiate in Newport.

From the beginning, the sisters were in charge of all the domestic duties of the house. This included cooking, serving meals, and cleaning. By the early 1990s, more lay employees were hired to work at the rectory, so the sisters' role shifted toward a more supervisory one. Through it all, the sisters developed close relationships with several bishops, clergy, staff and Cathedral parishioners. In addition to this ministry, the sisters extended their influence within and beyond the parish.

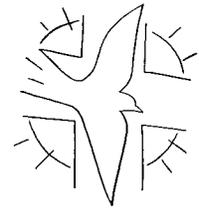
Over our 56 year history at the 'Bishop's house', 31 sisters contributed to a total of 290 years of service from that one location. Many sisters ministered longer than 25 years: Sister Gerard Grogan 37 years, Sister Pius Moore 28 years, Sister Immaculata Murphy 26 years, and Sister Andrew Crean 26 years.

Sister Joseph Edwards was at the Cathedral on January 18th

to celebrate and to say farewell. On that day she shared with us how deeply blessed she felt to have been in the community at its beginning in 1952 and to be there as it was to be closed in 2009. She expressed the gratitude that we all feel for the blessings received through the years:

*For all that has been - "Thanks,
For all that will be - "Yes"*

(From *Markings* by Dag Hammarskjöld)



Lawrence Plummer (Con't)

had the privilege of paying him was Northwest Airlines. He spent most of those years in the cargo division.

Larry was special in other ways, too. For example, this 'King of Firecrackers' loved a variety of activities: volunteering at the House of Yahweh Thrift Shop; sharing the fun/energy of square dancing; and entertaining family, friends, and so many others he met along his journey. Long before Larry and Peg were named Cluny Affiliates in 2002, we knew their kindness and generosity. Very often Peg said the 'magic' words and Larry put them into action. We pray that he is now experiencing the reality of these words:

Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, share your master's joy.
(Matthew 25:21)



The Province of Portugal

Sister Mary Patrice Watson

The first Cluny foundations in Portugal, in 1881 and 1885, were established for the purpose of providing/forming sisters for the missions in Angola. It was only ten years later that the sisters began to plant roots, as it were, and opened a school in Lisbon. Ironically, as they continued to spread their roots and settle in, the political climate rapidly became more threatening. In 1910 they had to leave everything behind as they were expelled from the country, along with every other religious congregation.

Fortunately, the expulsion was relatively brief and their recovery was quite swift. As early as 1921, the bishops asked our Superior General to open a novitiate in Portugal. She had no hesitation in granting that request. By the time the novitiate opened its doors a year later, five young women were ready to answer God's call.

Over the decades, many dedicated women have similarly responded to that call. Today there are 26 communities with approximately 225 sisters in the Province of Portugal coming from a number of different areas: mainland Portugal, the Azores, Madeira, Angola, Mozambique, Brazil, and France. Eighteen percent of these sisters are missioned to other Provinces such as Angola, Mozambique, and the USA & Canada.

The Province also maintains other mission connections. For example, one of its houses in Porto is a mission house for Angola. In other words, the main mission of the sisters in that community is to help the Church and the Congregation in Angola. Another example of the Province's mission connections is a special activity that's been organized by its Youth/Vocations pastoral team, namely, summer trips to Mozambique where a sister and a number of youth have shared missionary experiences.

Within the Province itself the sisters' works include: the retreat center at Torres Novas, near Fatima, where the Council of the Congregation is now meeting; various education facilities; day care/youth centers; homes for the aged; a university hostel; parish ministry; social service centers; and health services.

In evaluating the needs of the poor around them, the sisters saw two areas where they were able to respond by opening two new communities. One was in Valtorno, a very poor, rural area way beyond the mountains. The sisters have dreamed of going there for years and now that dream has become a reality. The second was in Quinto do Loureiro, which is on the outskirts of Lisbon. That is a new district where the people of Casal Ventoso have

been relocated. Casal Ventoso was a desperate, crime-ridden area where many people had to resort to unsavory means just to survive.

This new community was born and dedicated to Blessed Anne Marie on November 11, 2001 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of her death and the 120th anniversary of the Cluny Sisters' presence in Portugal.

We, too, celebrate the Cluny Sisters' presence in Portugal. May the following paraphrased words of the recent Province leader of Portugal, Sister Matilde Faneca, be a prayer for each one of us:

May we always be filled with the spirit of Blessed Anne Marie who wanted to be everywhere there was good to be done...

May we spread her spirit wherever we go, whether it be to a garden beside the sea or to distant frontiers...

May we never be afraid to risk announcing the Good News that God wills all people to be saved.

For more information, please see: www.sjclunyportugal.com.



Two women recently pronouncing vows as Cluny Sisters in the Province of Portugal.

The Provinces of Portugal and USA & Canada Special Connections

Sister Mary Patrice Watson

Since 1975 we have had a very close relationship with the Province of Portugal. That is because Sister Maria de Deus Rocha came to us then. She was joined by Sister Maria do Ceu Mendes in 1990. We'll let them tell you about it.



L-R: Sisters Maria do Ceu Mendes, Ena Maguire and Maria Rocha.

Cluny Connections: How did you make the first 'connection' with us?

Sister Maria: After my profession I was sent to Angola, where I enjoyed my mission for eleven years. Then the war began and there was unimaginable violence and destruction. The pressure for the Portuguese to leave the country was, for me, a call to another mission. It was time for me to visit my family in Brampton, Ontario - a city close to our sisters in Hamilton. I was later encouraged to stay with them until I could return to Angola. The rest is history!

Sister Maria do Ceu: Soon after profession, I was missioned to Mozambique. I ministered there from 1970 to 1989. During the war, life was very difficult. People were dying in the streets. One night, we all slept in a stucco closet because we were afraid of being attacked by the soldiers housed in the barracks across the street...In 1989 I heard our Superior General was looking for a volunteer to go to Canada to work among the Portuguese immigrants. I accepted the challenge.

CC: What has your ministry with the

Portuguese immigrants involved?

Sister Maria: At first I spoke little English and the sisters spoke little Portuguese, so you can imagine the dynamics! However, they helped me to become involved with the Portuguese immigrants in the schools where they were teaching and the mission community based at St. Mary's Catholic Church. I collaborated with that community to start such activities as a weekly bulletin, religious education classes, a youth group and home visits. A few years later, the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board hired me, first to teach Portuguese Heritage Language classes, then to do part-time liaison work. I interpreted for parents, teachers, administrative personnel, legal services and medical staff. In 1985 we opened the Portuguese Information Center with some help from the government. I served as the volunteer coordinator until Sister Maria do Ceu came.

Sister Maria do Ceu: By the time I became Director of the Portuguese Center, we were providing our

clients with information and support in a number of key areas: employment, medical services, immigration, advocacy, counseling and spiritual support. I served in that position until 2000 when I moved to full-time ministry at Saint Mary's parish. There I continue to serve the Portuguese community as pastoral assistant/secretary. As you would expect, I am involved in everything related to our parish life. For several years I was also involved in the Portuguese Heritage classes, serving as head teacher.

CC: Are there any final comments you'd like to make regarding this 'connection'?

Both Sisters: Working in Hamilton has been a very happy time, in spite of the difficulties that are part of any ministry. We have enjoyed being present to the Portuguese immigrants and feel that our service to them flows from the charism of our Congregation. We are grateful for the graces of these years in Hamilton and look forward to many more.



Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny
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Bringing Hope & Compassion

Be with Me Lord (Cont')

for us that we should be called children of God, and so we are..." (I Jn. 3:1) Our merciful God always looks on us with love, and forgets all our faults. It is only our love and trust that God asks in return.

The Last Discourse in Saint John's Gospel (Chapters 14-17) is a beautiful revelation of God's love in Jesus. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me..." (Jn. 14:1)

In the Paschal Mystery, we see love in action, our redemption being fulfilled by the Incarnate Word, who taught us how to live and die. As we pray with the gospel

stories we let go of our fears and discouragement. We can then reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters. Jesus tells us that whatever we do for them will be received as done to him. Out of our own weakness and want we can give "the cup of cold water" in Jesus' name. Our lives do need both religion and spirituality. It is all one as we live out our Baptismal promises. This is only possible through the gift of God's grace in our individual lives, sustained by the gathered faith community renewing the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

As we journey on together, the Holy Spirit is our guide and helper. "To be united to Christ is to enter into the sphere of the Spirit." (I Cor. 6:17) "Faith in the Lord is from and in the Spirit." (I Cor. 2:10)

Let us recapture the freedom of spirit that Jesus came to bring us: "For freedom Christ has set us free..." (Gal. 5:1) May we journey together with hope in our hearts, and keep the vision bright, for "Without a vision the people perish." (Prov. 29:18)

(Due to limited space, this article has been abridged. For a copy of the complete article, please contact the editor.)

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