

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

Connections

Liberate to Empower

Cluny Sisters chart course, elect leadership for the next six years

Sister Marie Cooper

In June, Sisters Joan Van der Zyden and Marie Cooper joined delegates from around the world gathered at the Mother House in Paris, France for the Cluny General Chapter 2012. The chapter was a time of intense prayer, discernment and work as the delegates articulated the vision and the plan to unfold our charism of liberation for the next six years.

Fr. Jean Lavigne, OP presented a keynote on evangelization as a prophetic stance in today's world. In sketching foundations for a new anthropology, or way of understanding humanity today, he demonstrated how the phenomenon we call globalization is characterized by speed and the reduction of distances, individualism, social networking and a felt personal need to "opt out", whether it be turning off the cell phone, ignoring emails, ending a relationship. Speed and sentiment can lead to intense, yet ephemeral relationships and commitments as opposed to the values of fidelity and perpetual commitment in the vowed life. He also demonstrated how social and ethical values evaluated in terms of price/cost often lead to ethical decisions based on an assigned dollar value. Religious life, a prophetic stance in the midst of the post-modern world, must seek out alternatives to the mainstream, an alter-modernism. This response is evangelization: it is a prophetic stance – announcing the Good News of God's unconditional love for all.

Using two passages from the Gospel of Luke, the Annunciation and the Visitation

and from the Book of the prophet Amos, Fr. Lavigne sketched some of the key themes of evangelization today. As prophets, we are called to denounce by living differently, and without condemning, while announcing the Good News. Like Mary, we passionately seek out and "visit" our sisters and brothers, particularly those who are most humiliated, oppressed and struggling to bring forth new life.

This talk challenged the delegates to "visit the congregation woman" – to contemplate both her light and shadow sides; to welcome and accept her as she is – and to find the ways to break into new life with others; to announce a life-giving way of being. The chapter, he insisted, is a time to tap into the treasure of experience and to set free, to bring healing and compassion, to build bridges that help us together with others encounter God. The chapter helps us to become, not merely to reproduce what we have already done.

And so the first task of the delegates, articulating the vision for the future, began with a "market place" and round table experiences. Each province set up a stall to demonstrate its "wares". Brightly colored cloths, maps, diagrams, PowerPoint shows, local products and data re-created the world of each geographical region. A small gift to those who visited – shell leis from Tahiti, SJC pins from Brazil, tiny alpaca llamas from Peru, scarves from India – are lasting mementos. The round tables

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CANADA

From the Editor's Desk

We are in mid-summer as I write this
and a hot summer it has been, surfacing
many prayers for open minds and hearts
as we face the consequences of global
warming. Our hearts go out especially
to those whose food sources have been
destroyed by drought and intense heat.
Despite repeated stated intentions by the
world's leaders to end hunger and famine,
famine remains a chronic threat in much
of Africa and Asia. The call to share our
resources resounds loud and clear. May our
attempts to move world powers to action be
as obvious!

Remember the Chapter for which we have
been asking you to pray? It happened in the
early summer and we report on it in this
issue. The best is yet to come as we strive to
implement the work of the Chapter in our
Province and throughout the Congregation
during the next six years. Keep up those
prayers!

For us in the Province of the USA and
Canada, the biggest shock (were we in
'denial?') came in the election of our own
Province Leader to the General Council.
Sr. Joan Van der Zyden will be leaving us to
take up residence at the Mother House in
Paris in the near future. Our prayers and
affection go with her!

Once again, we bring you stories of Cluny
Sisters who have labored many years in
our province. Sr. Andrew Crean celebrated

her Golden Jubilee on August 16. We are
grateful for her quiet presence among us
all these years. On May 14, Sr. Nora Sheil
(also known as Sr. Jude) found yet another
"place to go" in a final choice in her long life
of choices. May her exploration of so many
other possible places to go bring her eternal
joy!

Cluny Connections talks with Sr. Marie
Cooper, former Province Leader, who has
been with Renew International since June
2004. Sister Marie's work with RENEW
has taken her to Burundi and South Africa.
In this interview we talk mainly about
Burundi.

As we all know, time has a way of
demanding change. During the past few
years Cluny Sisters in the Province of
the United States and Canada have been
much on the move! First, the Province
House downsized to a smaller facility
in Middletown, RI. Then, the Sisters in
California merged three communities into
one in San Pedro. This fall, it is Canada's
turn! The Tudor style house at the corner
of Caroline Street and Aberdeen Avenue
that had been home to the Sisters for the
last 50+ years was sold this past summer
and (not without a twinge of sadness, mind
you!) Cluny moved to Good Shepherd
Square. Cluny Connections wishes them
well in their new environment!

Sister Regina

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Congratulations to Sister Andrew Who Celebrated her Golden Jubilee on August 16th!



Sister Andrew Crean

Although she delayed her response to the call a few years to help at home, Sr. Andrew never for a moment doubted she would one day be a religious sister. She is in awe of how quickly the past 50 years have flown by, filled with unexpected surprises as she served both on the east and west coasts of the USA. She writes, “I am very grateful to God and to the Congregation for all that these years have held.” We wish you many more happy years among us, Sr. Andrew!

Liberate to Empower (Continued)

that followed the different market place experiences provided an opportunity for delegates to enter more deeply into the life of the provinces.

Workshops, organized by language groups, generated discussion on a variety of topics submitted to the chapter from the provinces. Their input was then fed into the nine commissions who worked to submit proposals to the general assembly to articulate a vision for the future. The workshop and commission work involved examining and questioning the “congregation woman” in the light of a new moment in the world. Among the topics incorporated in this “new moment” were global concerns, use of technology for mission and communication, the spirit and principles of governance, internationality, Cluny spirituality and charism. Each commission brought its work to the general assembly for input, and towards the end of the chapter presented the final papers for a vote.

The second important task of the chapter delegates is to elect members to congregational leadership. The early days of the chapter provided many opportunities for the delegates to get to know one another and to better understand the life of

the congregation in the various provinces. Immediately before the elections time was set aside for prayer and reflection. On June 15th, the delegates elected Sister Claire Houareau from the Seychelles Islands as Superior General, (previously a General Councilor) and on the 22nd the eight councilors, and among them our own Province Leader, Sister Joan Van der Zyden. (See p. 4.)

Two parties punctuated the work – one on June 15th to celebrate Sister Claire’s election, and one on June 26th – to celebrate the work of the chapter and our “last night” together. Both were celebrations of our international, multicultural congregation woman, and of our interrelatedness and collaboration. The different pieces celebrated song, dance and poetry from around the world. African and Madagascan sisters danced in a blending of African and Madagascan style. The evening closed with a kaleidoscope of photos from the chapter accompanied by the singing of May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You.

On June 27th, the delegates were sent forth by Sister Claire Houareau to share the work of the chapter in their provinces and to contribute to the implementation the chapter decisions. The delegates processed

through the gardens in a closing ceremony that celebrated each geographical area and lifted it up in prayer. From the garden, the procession entered the chapel where each commission placed a large ginkgo leaf on a bare tree in the sanctuary, gradually filling it with new green life for 2012 and beyond as we live our vision of promoting liberation for empowerment.

Chapter

The use of the term *chapter* dates from the early monasteries. Monks or nuns would gather daily for a reading of a chapter of their Rule of Life. The room where they gathered was called the chapter room. Gatherings to discuss monastery life and business, make decisions, and elect leadership also took place in chapter rooms. Eventually, the gathering itself came to be known as a chapter.

In religious life, a chapter is a gathering of elected delegates whose role it is to review and revise the Rule and past decisions, to make new laws, give new orientations for the future, and to elect leadership.

Sister Joan Van der Zyden Elected to Congregational Leadership

Cluny Sisters elect eight General Councilors to assist the Superior General in governing the congregation. All the councilors are elected for the whole congregation, and the group is representative, as far as possible, of its international and multicultural reality.

Sister Joan was elected from the group of sisters in English-speaking countries: England, Ireland, West Indies, Australia/Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Fiji, Cook Islands, and North America.

The province is proud of her and assures her of our prayerful support in this new ministry of leadership. At the same time, we will dearly miss her as province leader and as a member of our province.

Photos from the 2012 General Chapter

Sister Claire Is Elected Superior General



Sisters Joan Van der Zyden, Claire Houareau and Marie Cooper

New Cluny Leadership Group

Sister Claire Houareau (Seychelles Islands)
– Superior General

Sister Carmen Moranville (France)
– First Assistant

Sister Clare Stanley
(Sierra Leone, West Africa)
– Second Assistant

Sister Matilda Faneca (Portugal)

Sister Bernadette Pinto (India)

Sister Teresa Rai (India)

Sister Veronica Tyimuma (Angola)

Sister Joan Van der Zyden (USA/Canada)

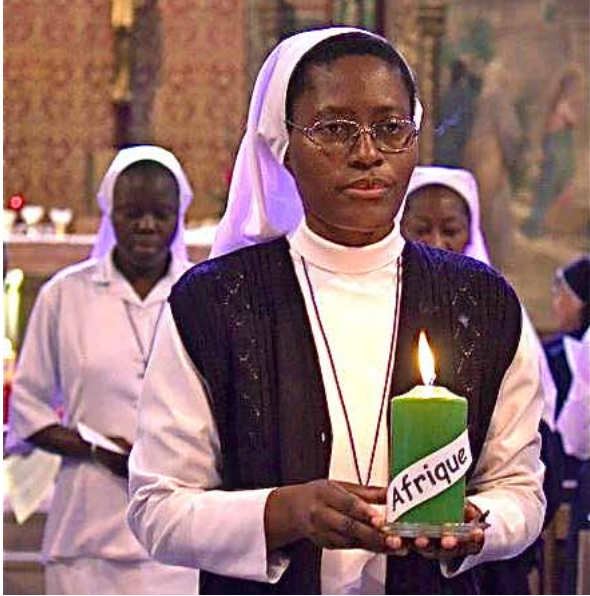
Sister Isabel Vasquez (Spain)

Round Table Discussions



Provinces of the Pacific: Sisters Tia Ah Sam (Tahiti), Valerie O'Donnell (Australia/Papua New Guinea), and Allison McAlister (New Zealand/Cook Islands/Fiji)

Opening Day of the Chapter



Opening Ceremony: Sister Domingas Gueve (Province Leader of Angola) leads Sisters of the African provinces from the chapel to the General Assembly Hall.



A treat from Portugal after the opening ceremonies: Sisters Matilde Faneca, Ludovina Lemos (Province Leader), Otilia Maria Gonçalves, and Maria Helena Moreno in the mother house garden.

Market Place Exhibits



Sister Miriam Felix welcomes visitors to the Peru market stall.



L-R: Sisters Regina Isaac, Anne Augustine Punnakuzhy, Elsa Puthussery, Marie Therese Chinnappan, and Emiliana Emprayil give Sister Marie Cooper a traditional Indian welcome as she enters the marketplace of the six Indian provinces.

Closing Ceremony



Sister Antonia Wimbo from Angola pours water from an African calabash as we give thanks for precious water and pray for all the areas suffering from drought in Africa.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

In Memoriam



Sister Nora Sheil

Sr. Nora's response when she was once asked what led her to enter Cluny sums her up to a "T"! "I saw a map of the world on which the Cluny missions were marked. So many choices! So many places to go! That would definitely be my preference," she said.

Born in Carrowreagh, County Mayo on September 5, 1928, Nora Sheil entered Gallen Priory on October 3, 1945. After Profession of Vows on March 11, 1948, Sr. Jude set sail for New Zealand. Of that experience she once drily commented, "As a duck is most happy on water, I am most happy with solid land under my feet!"

Suva, Fiji and Tauranga, New Zealand were her choices from 1949 to 1964 where she taught in elementary and high school and lectured at the Catholic Training College. Here, she relished the opportunity of educating young women from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds.

During a home visit to Ireland in 1965, she was asked to accept yet another choice, this time in Hamilton, Ontario. Happily moving from sun to snow, Sr. Jude taught grade 6 at St. Joseph's School until a new place to go brought her back from the snow to the sun in 1969. In California, she continued her career as an educator at both Saints Peter and Paul School in Wilmington and St. Catherine Laboure School in Torrance. Her broad interest in everything around her led her to the Charismatic Renewal, Marriage Encounter, the RCIA and the Neo-Catechumenate until, in 1983, the Spirit led her to an entirely new choice.

Having completed studies in Clinical Pastoral Education at Loyola-Marymount University, Sr. Nora was ready to face yet another place to go. She had always been interested in the sick. Now she was ready to embrace them. First at Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital in Inglewood, California, then at St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, California, she was highly respected and noted for her compassion and caring in providing spiritual care to the sick and the dying and supporting their loved ones. When she made the decision to return to Ireland in 2004, Brother Richard Hirbe, who was then her supervisor, deeply regretted her choice. The secret of her success as a clinical pastoral worker can be found in this comment made in 1998 during an interview printed in the Los Angeles Tidings. "Sister Sheil explained that she imagines every patient who comes to her as one of her own family members. 'I think, 'What if this were my mother? My cousin? How would I want them to be treated?' She said."

Those who knew Sr. Nora remember her as a positive, optimistic, fun-loving person with a notable sense of joy, a wonderful smile and a lightheartedness she never lost, even as her memory faded. Outgoing, yet very reserved where her personal life was concerned, she was a woman who truly followed the urging of her own heart so that she often came across as one who walked to the beat of a different drum. The same could be said of Jesus whom she so faithfully served in religious life for more than 50 years. She also made fabulous Irish soda bread!

Cluny Affiliates

Robert Del Rossi

Cluny Affiliate Robert "Bob" Del Rossi died at the age of 79 on Monday, June 18, 2012. A great friend and supporter of our Sisters in the Providence community for many years, Bob was a very active member of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral parish in Providence for over 30 years. He demonstrated his deep faith through committed service as a trustee of the Cathedral, an active fund raiser and a member of the finance committee. In earlier years he was a Eucharistic minister and CCD teacher at St. Michael's Church in Georgiaville. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

Zelia Vivieros

Zelia Maria Viveiros, both a Cluny Affiliate and Associate in Hamilton, Ontario, died suddenly on April 16, 2012 while enjoying a Golden Jubilee trip with her husband, visiting a niece in Florida. Zelia was a friend to all she met. Her warm generosity and dedication as a volunteer to the Portuguese Community of Hamilton and St. Mary's Church will long be remembered. Her artistic work in crochet and her outstanding culinary skills were deeply appreciated by her family and friends. May she rest in the joy of the Lord!

Pay us a visit!

Website:

www.clunyusandcanada.org

Blog:

<http://clunyusandcanada.blogspot.com/>

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Cluny Fosters Small Christian Communities in Africa

Cluny Connections: Sr. Marie, what does your ministry at RENEW International involve?

Sister Marie: It involves a number of things. I provide training workshops for lay leaders in parishes. On one level this means organizing a whole evangelization process in the parish while on another level, it means training the actual facilitators in small Christian communities. I also do faith enrichment workshops for adults that are open to the whole parish as well as retreats on a particular theme connected with whatever process is being developed.

CC: Where is this taking place, just in New Jersey or does it go beyond?

SM: RENEW International has been in existence for over 30 years. It began in the Archdiocese of Newark, but it very quickly spread throughout the US. It has been used in 170 dioceses in the States, across Canada and in 23 other countries. I don't work actually in any diocese in NJ. In the United States I go to Reno, Nevada and Jefferson City, Missouri and to St. Boniface in Winnipeg, Manitoba. But a lot of my work takes place in Africa.

CC: Tell me about that.

SM: I came to RENEW originally because they were looking for someone who was bilingual French and English to go to Burundi. RENEW established a partnership with Catholic Relief Services, the United States Agency for International Development and the Bishops' Conference of Burundi to participate in the Burundi National Peace Program. So that was what got me to RENEW. For the first five years, I went to Burundi twice a year to train their trainers. I would go to a diocese and they would gather anywhere from 25 to 50

people who would be catechists or parish secretaries. Many of them were former seminarians, so there were always some who spoke French fairly well. I would train them how to train the leaders of Basic Ecclesial Communities, creating smaller communities within the larger faith community, a real face-to-face community where people gather every week, reflect on the Sunday Gospel, and share faith in a way that would eventually move them to action. We saw some phenomenal examples of action!

One Basic Ecclesial Community gathered on a hillside in Munanira (Diocese of Ngozi). They were all uneducated subsistence farmers, except for the schoolteacher who was not the leader but an active participant. In each of the small faith-sharing groups in the community the Spirit was obviously working. One project surfaced in most of the groups at the same time. Basically, people were saying, "We're poor and we don't have any money but there are people who are starving and we should reach out to them." They began reflecting on what they could do and decided that they would all commit to tithe their potato crops. They sold their potatoes, but then they didn't know what to do with the money. The pastor, Father Charles, who was very involved, sent someone off to learn how to handle the money. After more reflection, they decided that if they were going to make a difference, they had to own community property. They started buying livestock with their potato money. When next I went to see them, they had two cows, two goats, two sheep and a flock of chickens. I believe today they have a herd! They began providing high protein foods to families whose children were dying of malnutrition. A barter situation evolved. As they

continued to tithe their potato crops, they continued to purchase animals. Now they have a surplus of milk, butter, eggs and cheese that they can sell at the market. So they have established a new cash economy on their hillside.

CC: How heartwarming for you to see such fruit from your efforts! This project must be very dear to your heart! These people really get it!

SM: Yes. I'm still in touch with the people there, especially with their pastor, Fr. Charles, with whom I worked closely on the Burundi project. He recently wrote to me that some 800 people in his parish have come forward and asked forgiveness for what they did during the war. They have been reconciled with the community. Fr. Charles says this is a result of RENEW, a great gift to his people that has made a huge difference in the life of his community.

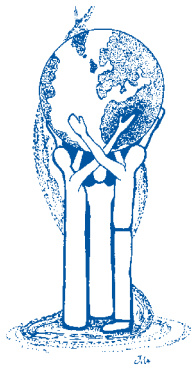
CC: Sister Marie, how do you see your ministry at RENEW International connected to our charism?

SM: There were two things that Anne Marie Javouhey wanted to do in Africa. The first was to help Africans stand on their own two feet. The second was to bring them the Good News of Jesus, and she saw these as one and the same. To bring the Good News of Jesus was to help people to become whole as human beings. It didn't matter to her what the color of their skin was, or what their sex was or to what ethnic group they belonged. She worked in France among her own people, she sent sisters to Africa and India and she went to Africa herself. When she wrote back from Africa on her first trip she wrote, "Oh! How I love Africa! How I thank



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Bringing Hope & Compassion

Cluny Around the World (Con't)

God for having sent me here!" So I think my ministry at RENEW falls right into our charism because what I'm doing is not going and doing something for people. I go to do something that they're not able to do by themselves so that when I leave, they're able to carry it forward.

CC: It sounds like this ministry is very life giving for you.
SM: Definitely. And I also am enjoying working in South Africa as well as the United States and Canada. I really am pleased to serve the French-speaking communities in Canada.

CC: God bless you on your way!

RENEW International

Renew International fosters spiritual renewal in the Catholic tradition by empowering individuals and communities to encounter God in everyday life, deepen and share faith, and connect faith with action.



Sister Marie with the Basic Ecclesial Community at Munanira, Burundi.

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