

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

Connections

A Ministry of Hospitality: Welcoming Irish Missionaries back Home

On October 12, 1947, a contingent of Irish Cluny Sisters arrived at St. Joseph Home for Boys in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The founders were Mother Clare, who had already been stationed in India, Sisters Catherine Finn, Margaret Mary Rigney, Philomena McCann and Immaculata Murphy. This was not the first time Irish Cluny Sisters had stepped upon American soil. Back in the 1800's Mother Emilien led a group of Clunys who made foundations in Morrilton and Conway, Arkansas, and in Salix, Iowa. Over one hundred years after their departure, their memory and their ministry are still being kept alive!

The new venture in 1947 would initiate more than half a century of service in North America and Canada. Over the years, the Sisters have served in Philadelphia, PA, California, Rhode Island; West Virginia; Arkansas; New Jersey; and Guelph and Hamilton, ON, Canada. Initially, they were Irish. Later, local women and women coming from other countries including England, Scotland, France, Canada, the South

Seas and Haiti joined these founding women. Their primary ministry was education, but they also engaged in outreach to the poor and orphans, ministry to priests and spiritual accompaniment. For younger generations, they served as wisdom figures and role models, and some of them died here. Others remain in the various communities. Still others returned to their homeland to retire.

In the late 70's, the boarding school in Mount Sackville, Ireland, once the fertile ground for many Irish vocations to Cluny, closed as the number of sisters decreased. The school continues to function as a day school with 640 second level students. The classrooms remained as classrooms while dormitories were converted into spacious ensuite rooms for the sisters of the community.

In 1999, the Province expanded the existing infirmary. Nursing Home rooms were added and the parlours of old became day rooms and an oratory. The site was registered as a Nursing Home with the Health Board

Continued on page 4

In this Issue

A Ministry of Hospitality:
Welcoming Irish Missionaries
back Home

From the Editor's Desk

Sophia Academy

Cluny around the World
Lourdes, France

News from the Associates



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

Editor: Regina Brunelle, SJC
lprunelle@gmail.com
St. Joseph Convent
Good Shepherd Square
15 Ray St. N. Apt. 802
Hamilton, ON L8R 2X5
CANADA
Phone: (289) 389-8534

Layout: Marie Cooper, SJC
clunymarie@gmail.com
857 North Avenue West
Westfield, NJ 07090
Phone: (908) 728-0090

Relocating?

Want to subscribe a friend to
Cluny Connections?

Please use the form below (right)
Just send back your label from this
issue with your new address
attached to:

Cluny Connections
7 Restmere Terrace
Middletown, RI 02842
USA

Reminder: to receive *Cluny Connections* via
Email or to add a friend to the list, please
send name and address to:
clunydevelopment@hotmail.com

Thank you.



Visit us online:

Get to know us better on our website:
www.cluniusandcanada.org

Connect via FaceBook for frequent
updates:
[https://www.facebook.com/
cluniusacanada?sk=wall](https://www.facebook.com/cluniusacanada?sk=wall)

Check out our Blog for news and in-
depth articles:
[http://cluniusandcanada.blogspot.
com/](http://cluniusandcanada.blogspot.com/)

From the Editor's Desk



Since our Winter 2014 issue we have almost come to believe that the unending winter of *The Narnia Tales* was to be our lot, too! But as I write this, spring is tentatively making an appearance; an occasional robin timidly sings its mating call; and I've even spotted a daffodil or two! Resurrection is in the air! May the Hope of Easter continue to dwell in your hearts in spite of all the challenges to hope we face each day! Christ is risen indeed and his Spirit daily breaks into our world anew!

Cluny Connections celebrates spring with a look at the foundational role of the Irish Province in the springtime of the Province of the United States and Canada. Highlighting the work of evangelization done by our Sisters in Lourdes seemed appropriate for the month of May when we Catholic Christians rejoice in the gift of Mary as a model of faith. Once again, CC returns to our *Circle of Love* with

the story of Sophia Academy's own little resurrection after a destructive break-in several months ago.

At the end of a meeting organized by the bishops' conference of England and Wales held in the Vatican in April Pope Francis met privately with four women, all former sex workers, who were victims of human trafficking. He said, "Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity." Check out how our associates have been focusing on the directives of our General Chapter and following the example of Pope Francis by educating themselves and others on how to alleviate the plight of those caught in the net of trafficking.

Have a great summer! See you in the fall!

Sister Regina Brunelle

Address Change

Change __ Correct __ Add __ Remove __

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State/Prov./Postal Code _____

Country _____

Email _____

Please email to:

clunydevelopment@hotmail.com

or send to:

Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny PO Box 66 Newport RI 02840-0001

Check/Credit Card Gift

We invite you to donate through
our secure web site donation
page at:

[www.cluniusandcanada.org/
pages/share_donate.html](http://www.cluniusandcanada.org/pages/share_donate.html)

Donation by check:

Please make check payable to:
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny
and send to:

Cluny Circle of Love

Sophia Academy: Reflecting Wisdom in the Girl

Sister Luke Parker



Photo courtesy of Sophia Academy.

Students at Sophia Academy with Sister Mary Reilly, RSM, Founder

Sophia Academy is a school of abundant opportunity where middle school girls discover and develop their potential and become confident and compassionate young women prepared to meet the challenges of their world. (Mission Statement)

Thirteen years ago, Cluny Sisters were a part of the Religious Collaborative that formed in support of Sister Mary Reilly, RSM's dream to establish an educational opportunity for girls at risk in the city of Providence, RI. Since then the financial support we give to this ministry continues our province commitment to place our corporate resources in service by embracing local projects needed in the places where we live and minister. Sophia Academy has been a long time ministry of our "Circle of Love" and we are proud of our collaboration over the years to provide creative, innovative educational opportunities for these young girls.

Founded in 2001, Sophia Academy is the only independent middle school in Providence that offers a gender specific, holistic educational experience with a focus on the intellectual and emotional growth of its students and families. At Sophia girls from economically challenged families find an empowering educational program in a vibrant community where they learn to live their lives as confident, compassionate young women. Sophia Academy's 60 students are city residents and reflect

the demographics of the Providence School District.

Sophia is proud of the academic excellence of its students. Last year, in the New England standardized testing program, the students ranked in the 90%+ percentile in proficiency in Math, English and writing skills. Each year graduates qualify for the best high schools. Last year four students were accepted at Classical High School and one girl was awarded a Lincoln Scholar four year tuition scholarship.

After a successful \$1.5 million capital campaign, the academy moved to its new home on Elmwood Avenue in Providence. The new campus is named after the school's founder, Sister Mary Reilly, RSM. With this move, the majority of Sophia students and alumnae live within walking distance of the school. The campus also provides more discrete and larger spaces, outdoor green space, and an enhanced security system. The classrooms are all on the first floor making the school handicap accessible. (The bank vault used for storage in the basement is a reminder of the time the building served as a

branch of Industrial National Bank and later, Fleet Bank!)

The new facility allows for the expansion of after school and summer programs; strengthens the school's partnership with neighboring community organizations; and makes it possible for staff and students to be active participants in the neighborhood. Thanks to the move, Sophia Academy now has greater opportunities to bring about hope and change for a different future, not only in its students, but also in the community at large. Congratulations, Sophia Academy!

To learn more about Sophia Academy or to make a donation, visit <http://sophia-academy.org/>.

From the desk of
Blessed Anne Marie

In Sierra Leone there are more than 500 little girls who have been seized from the slave traders, and twice as many boys. From this number they are allowing us to choose some between the ages of eight and ten with whom to start our school. (Letter 62)

Ministry of Hospitality (Continued from Page 1)

and became known as St. Joseph's Nursing Home, Mount Sackville. As in all modern Nursing Homes, the sisters in the Nursing Home enjoy different levels of care, some being classified as independent; others as totally dependent. Every level of care is under the same roof, thus enabling the sisters in both the Nursing Home and the community to pray together, eat together, and recreate together.

There is also a primary school on the campus. It has about 200 students and is closely connected with the convent.

Though different from the past, the bond between the school and convent continues. Both primary and second-level students are involved in the nursing home in a variety of ways. Some go for work experience; others to do part-time work; still others to entertain the sisters or help out at the annual fair; and some come to the sisters for stories for their projects. The students also do a lot of fund-raising for Cluny Missions.

This is where our sisters opting to return to their homeland to retire are welcomed. We in the province of the United States and Canada are deeply grateful to the Irish Province and to all those sisters who supported the mission in North America over the years. For the most part they came straight from the novitiate and gave us the best years of their lives.

Cluny Connections asked the Irish Province that welcomed these sisters home what it has been like to have missioned so many young Irish women to other lands, and then to welcome them home to

bring their missionary lives full circle. In response, Sister Louis Mary O'Connor, herself a returning missionary from West Africa, offered the following reflection.

There is a line in an old Irish song about homecoming that says, "There'll be a welcome there for you!"

From the perspective of the Province of Ireland and Great Britain, the return of retired Irish missionaries to their homeland provides a huge expression of "the cor unum" that envelopes the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny.*

As older members of the congregation we have lasting memories of our formative experience in the Novitiate in Gallen Priory, Ferbane where, down through the years, we prepared for the day when we would be called "to go out to the whole world and share the good news." Our oldest memories are of the farewell missioning services in Mt. Sackville chapel. There, as the strains of "Go ye afar, go teach all nations" resounded far and wide, we were sent on our way to the four corners of the globe to bring, in the words of Pope Francis, "the Joy of the Gospel."*

The spirit of the charism of Anne Marie Javouhey was our strength and support. We became evangelisers in the schools, the homes, the clinics, and the parishes. There we would spend a lifetime of service to the poor and needy until circumstances, highlighted in Ecclesiasties 3, reminded us "that there is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven ..." Brought face to face with the need to let go, we were led to a new lease on



Sister Pius Moore

freedom in retirement. For some of us, that has meant leaving a beloved mission to return to the cradle of our religious lives.

Here in the Province of Ireland and Great Britain we have been privileged to have had retired sisters join us from so many of our provinces worldwide. It is a joy to welcome them home. Their shared experience of mission enriches our community life as together we praise and thank God for all that has been in our lives over the years.

*Cor unum et anima una, meaning 'one heart and one soul' was an expression used by Blessed Anne Marie to express the unity she desired for her congregation.

*The Irish Novitiate left Gallen Priory when it was sold to a Nursing Home Corporation. Some Sisters remained there until December 12, 2013, thus ending 92 years of Cluny presence at the Priory.

The sisters pictured on these pages served in the Province of USA & Canada and now reside at Mt. Sackville Convent. Ed.

Continued on page 5



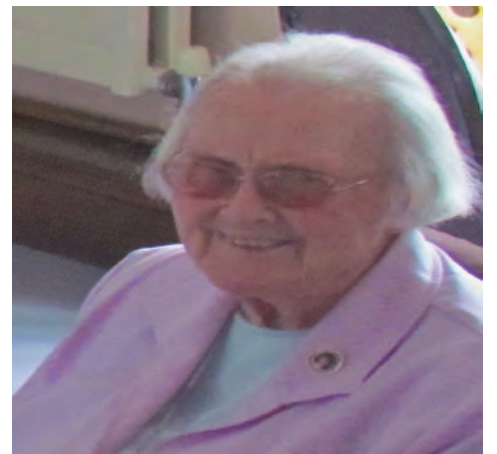
Mt. Sackville Convent and chapel



Sister Gerard Grogan



Sister Eucharua McLoone



Sister Angela Mannion



Sister Christina Dolan



Sister Yvonne Kelly



Sister Teresa Kenny



Cluny in France Spreading the Joy of the Gospel in Lourdes

Sister Marie Cooper

In a recent interview, Sister Noëlle-Marie Kbidy, coordinator of the Cluny Community in Lourdes, shared the following with me.



Statue of Our Lady in the grotto at the shrine.

Nestled in the Lannedarré neighborhood of Lourdes, at 3 Three Archangels Street, three Cluny Sisters form a community close to the people of Lourdes. The community was founded 125 years after Our Lady revealed to St. Bernadette Soubirous, “I am the Immaculate Conception” and millions of pilgrims had come to the grotto known for miraculous healing of both body and spirit. When it was blessed in October 26, 1983, the community was placed under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception. The original focus for the founding three sisters was to welcome Cluny Sisters from around the world on their pilgrimages to Lourdes.

At the time of the foundation, the elderly inhabited the neighborhood, but with the years, the neighborhood has

changed. Today young couples with children surround the convent. Proximity to these families provides wonderful opportunities for the sisters to reach out to them and to be the face, the hands, and the voice of Christ among them.

These young people are baptized Catholics, but they do not go to church. The sisters initiate relationships with them through invitations to the convent, offers of support, and presence in the life of the neighborhood. The neighbors are delighted with this openness, discovering religious in a whole new way. Because the sisters engage with the neighbors, the neighbors are also getting to know one another. Previously, they lived side by side as strangers. The sisters’ outreach has made of the community a welcoming place for young adults to visit for a chat or share a meal.

Last Christmas, for example, two couples were invited to dinner. One of the couples is retired, the other quite young. The older man, with tears in his eyes, expressed his joyful amazement at being welcomed at the sisters’ table. As the group conversed, the younger man shared his inability to find a job. Before long, the older man was able to help him find work.

This year, the sisters held a Mardi Gras celebration. Each family received a written invitation, and every one of them came! They brought crepes, waffles, and other goodies to share. This was a wonderful friendly neighborhood gathering. Coming closer to Easter, they received another invitation to come for a gathering on Monday of Holy Week. At this gathering, the sisters welcomed them and, over refreshments, began a discussion about the meaning of Easter.

[Continued on page 7](#)

Cluny in France (Continued)



Pilgrims at the shrine.

The sisters also welcome lay pilgrims to Lourdes. Three years in a row the director of a school in Reunion came with his wife and adult daughter, who suffered from advanced cancer, asking for a cure. They were not granted the miracle they sought, for the daughter died. The miracle they did receive was a miracle of grace. The father was very religious, but the wife had not been practising. They made one more trip to Lourdes after the daughter died. This pilgrimage was one of thanksgiving: the mother told the community that she had rediscovered her faith and that she had been healed interiorly.

The sisters are engaged in parish life and in the life of the shrine as well. Sister Noëlle-Marie has trained catechists to teach the children while she teaches their parents. In this way, the faith is deepened in the whole family. At the shrine, the sisters accompany the pilgrims, helping them understand the symbols of the shrine, and exercise a listening ministry, spending time with those who need someone to talk to.

Sister Marie-Pierre teaches French to recently arrived immigrants from many lands and Sister Thérèse, a young 91, offers her many rosaries to support the ministry of the other sisters.

In the midst of the variety of ways the sisters live the joy of the Gospel among the people of Lourdes, they also continue to welcome many Cluny Sisters, Associates and collaborators coming on pilgrimage. They give us testimony of the joyful welcome and hospitality this tiny group of three offer one and all.

Photos: Sister Noëlle-Marie Kbidy



The sick at the shrine.



A neighbor and her little one.



Sister Thérèse with a little neighbor.



Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny
Province of USA and Canada, Inc.
7 Restmere Terrace
Middletown, RI 02842

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Newport RI 02840
Permit No. 170



Bringing Hope & Compassion

News from Cluny Associates

California

In February, the California Associates sponsored a workshop on Human Trafficking at Mary Star of the Sea parish. Sr. Kathleen Bryant, RSC was the guest speaker. Several exhibitors also shared information on the topic. Our California Associates have also sponsored two retreats and are planning a Fair Trade Fair in the future.

Rhode Island

The Rhode Island associate group is gaining new momentum. The group that gathers at the provincial house benefits from the enthusiasm of long-time members for the Cluny charism gifted to Blessed Anne Marie for the whole Church. New members are becoming familiar with the life and work of the founder and congregational patrons and discovering the broad extent of the work of Cluny Sisters all over the world. Members share in the days of recollection

offered at the Salve Regina University chapel. This offers them the opportunity to reflect on the call to New Evangelization being extended by the Church.

Canada

On April 26, the Hamilton, ON group participated once again in the trafficking workshop entitled Voice of Survivors: Journey into Hope. The workshop was organized by the Waterdown Stop Human Trafficking Committee and sponsored by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Three women, former victims of trafficking, shared their stories of entrapment and exploitation in the world of commercial sexual exploitation and their escape. Listening to the experiences of women who had been personally victimized brought the issue front and centre. Next step: promote legislation to put an end to what Pope Francis has called a disgrace and a crime against humanity.

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