

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

Connections

A Reflection on Blessed Anne Marie

Colleen Kaveney and Brigid Sully
(Associates in California)

When the California Associates were first asked to write an article, it was easy to think of many words that have been used to describe Anne Marie Javouhey. However we always came back to one focus, God's Holy Will. Anne Marie followed God's will and, along with her own ironclad determination and humility, seemed to overcome every obstacle put in her way. She sent her daughters out into unknown regions of the world to do God's Will and 'to do a little good'. They are now sharing that gift with us.

We come together once a month with the Cluny Sisters at Mary Star of the Sea Convent in San Pedro, California to pray and reflect on how the spirituality and charism of Blessed Anne Marie guides our own lives. We also get great encouragement and support from each other as we embrace more fully God's will and 'work' for us, both individually and as a group. All of this involves trust, perseverance, courage, love and having a spirit of adventure - just as it did for Anne Marie Javouhey. She was a patient woman who had a great love for God. She exercised her strength in her conviction to follow the will of God.



We are blessed in frequently being able to read and discuss the life and letters of Blessed Anne Marie. In many of them we are reminded about striving for holiness. 'Be courageous and let all of you strive to be saints.' (Letter 126) 'Avail of every circumstance where you could be useful to advance in the way of the saints.' (Letter 491) '[You] will do much good...as long as [you] strive for holiness.' (Letter 756)

In the book, *My Life with the Saints*, James Martin, S.J. tells how his favorite saints have been resources for him in every time of need because they were exemplars of holy struggle. What a resource Blessed Anne Marie is for us! What a blessing it is for us to be united with Cluny Associates, Affiliates and Sisters around the world daily striving, sometimes struggling, to pray and do a little good, yet surely walking in the footsteps of 'saint' Anne Marie Javouhey.

Grant that we in the Church of our day may zealously continue the work you confided to her. (Novena Prayer to Blessed Anne Marie)

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From the Editor's Desk

Happy New Year from all of us in the Province of USA and Canada! We wish you a joyful heart, a peaceful mind, and the wisdom so necessary to recognize and respond to the signs of our times. May this *Year of Faith* be a grace-filled year for all of you!

Our newsletter highlights the enthusiasm of our Associates in living out the spirituality and mission of Blessed Anne Marie; good-byes and welcomes; outreach to the less fortunate at Christmas time; and the celebration of the lives of Sisters, Affiliates and Associates laid to rest. We also rejoice with Sister Maria Rocha who will be celebrating her golden jubilee on March 19th.

Sister Eugenia writes about the Cluny/Ursuline collaborative outreach to Lucy's Hearth in R.I. Along the same lines, the Hamilton Associates invited the Seniors at Good Shepherd Square to a Christmas Season Tea and shared

in the weekly Eucharist at the St. Joseph Hospital Psychiatric site just prior to Christmas, leading the congregation in singing Carols and providing little gifts to each at the end of Mass; small things, but they brought joy to those often forgotten.

Our focus in Cluny Around the World takes us to yet another area where Cluny Sisters proclaim the Good News. Guinea-Conakry is a very poor country just beginning to rise from the scars of years of conflict. It takes courage to begin each day with new enthusiasm when there appear to be too many needs to make even a small dent. In this *Year of Faith*, our Guinean Sisters are challenged, "to live by faith and not by sight" far beyond what any of us will most likely be called to do. Hopefully, their story will stir the same trusting faith in us!

Happy reading!

Sister Regina Brunelle

Cluny Associate Mary Rose Varacalli

We have just learned of the death of Mary Rose Varacalli, one of our West Virginia Associates, who deeply loved Cluny. A graduate of Marshall University where she earned a Master's Degree plus, she taught thirty nine years in the Logan County Schools. She was named Teacher of the Year. Very active in St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Parish, she served as secretary, organist and director of the children's choir. May she rest in peace!

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

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Cluny Circle of Love Embraces Women at Risk



Sister Eugenia Brady

As cited in an article in the Spring 2012 issue of Cluny Connections, Lucy's Hearth, located in Middletown, Rhode Island, is supported by our province as part of the Cluny Circle of Love. It provides temporary accommodation for nine mothers and their children who are homeless as a result of personal crisis, divorce, eviction or lack of affordable housing. The shelter offers each family unit a bedroom equipped with all the essentials for a comfortable personal space. Families share the kitchen, TV room, dining room, playground, bathrooms and learning center.

As a transitional shelter, its goal is to assist residents to quickly gain the life skills they need that will foster independence and prevent future homelessness. Incorporated in 1984, it opened first as an overnight shelter with one staff person and a dedicated group of volunteers, including Cluny Sister Ena Maguire, then missioned in Newport. In 2007, the shelter was affiliated with the non-profit Family Service of Rhode Island while remaining a separate 501(c)3 non-profit agency. The Council On Accreditation accredited the shelter in 2011.

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Cluny Sisters Welcome New Province Leader



Sisters Joan and Luke (May 2011)

Sister Regina Brunelle

On November 11, 2012 Sister Luke Parker became the new leader of the Cluny Sisters of the Province of the United States and Canada. Until her installation, Sister Luke had been serving as assistant to the provincial, Sister Joan Van der Zyden, who was elected to the General Council of the Congregation at the recent General Chapter. The members of the new Provincial Council are: Sister Mary Glynn, Sister Genevieve Marie Vigil, and Sister Eugenia Brady.

Sister Joan left for the Mother House in Paris on December 29. She will be part of a team of eight Councilors and the General Superior mandated by the Chapter of June 2012 to lead the congregation for the next six years in implementing the Chapter decisions.

Gratitude and prayerful good wishes to both, Sisters Joan and Luke; to Joan for nine years of dedicated service and to Luke for generously accepting the role of leadership in the province.

We were delighted to welcome Sr. Morag Collins, our former General Superior, for a few weeks during December. Then known as Sr. Dominic, she began her life as a professed Cluny Sister in the Hamilton, ON community in 1958. We wish her well in her new assignment in her native Scotland.

Congratulations to our Jubilarian



Sister Maria Rocha

On March 19, 2013 Sr. Maria Rocha will celebrate her Golden Jubilee as a Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny. Asked to share what these years have meant to her she writes:

Fifty years after my profession, I am filled with great gratitude for the gift of my vocation. Over the years, I have gained the courage to say 'yes' more completely every day in order to follow Jesus without reserve. I offer a heartfelt thanks to all who have journeyed with me, especially my parents. I am grateful for the nurture and support along the way through joyful times and days of struggle. Every day in my diverse ministries in three countries on three continents brought new growth and blessings. What a privilege it has been to share in the mission of Jesus! Gracious God! In the days remaining, teach me true compassion that I may learn to love as you love us! Amen.

In Memoriam



Sister Laetitia O'Donoghue

Serve the Lord with joy. (Psalm 100:2)

Vibrant, alive, free, creative, graceful, energetic, joyful ... these words describe Sister Laetitia for those who loved her. Latin for “joy”, her name aptly describes the woman who sang, danced and contagiously laughed her way through life. “Tish”, loved music, singing, literature, history, the public library, museums, the Newport mansions... in short, everything that spoke to and of people. A strong proponent of freedom, she honored the right to personal autonomy. Because social justice was important to her, she fearlessly spoke her truth when necessary.

Mary Theresa O'Donoghue was born in Tralee, Co. Kerry on December 6, 1928. After obtaining her leaving certificate in 1946, she went to England where she worked as a junior student teacher until she entered the Ferbane Novitiate in 1948. Professed in Ireland in 1951, Sister Laetitia spent her religious life in education in Wilmington and Torrance, California and Newport, RI. Drama and music were her special gifts and the children in her choirs and plays delighted in them. Quick and curious as a hummingbird, Tish could turn anything- even a walking tour of Newport - into an adventure.

She also had a serious side. She drew her deep faith from her Irish heritage. Her love of nature and her artistic side led naturally to a profound contemplative life that enlivened her ministry. This inner life carried her through the Gethsemane of her last four years. She realized something was changing but she did not know where it would all lead. Like Jesus, she was afraid. The fear, the questioning became a call to an ever deeper surrender. She often prayed the Suscipe of St. Ignatius. “Take, Lord, receive... You have given all to me. Now I return it. Give me only your love and your grace. That's enough for me!” On October 6, 2012, in one last movement of surrender, her bright spirit flowed into the freedom of eternity.



Sister Brigid Costelloe

I have called you by name. You are mine (Isaiah 43:1)

Sister Brigid's heart's desire was for *more*, the *more* that comes in discerning and doing the Will of God. Emily Brigid Costelloe, born on October 18, 1927 in Bandon, Co. Cork, left home at the age of 19. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and began the adventure of a missionary life. In 1950, she left Ireland for her first missionary experience in a newly formed community in the United States.

Brigid's heart attentively waited for the ways of God to unfold. Her heart's desire for *more* guided her in discerning God's Will in her life. She spent 28 years as an educator in Wilmington, CA, Newport, RI, then Torrance, CA. She taught young children and old; she prepared them for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Brigid then became involved in parish ministry in St. Catherine Laboure Parish, Torrance, CA. Her listening heart, attuned to the workings of God's Spirit within and in others, gently encouraged and challenged them to recognize and exercise their gifts.

In 1989 she left parish ministry to continue a ministry of spiritual companioning and retreat work. After 8 years in the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange, CA and ministry in Cypress, Sister Brigid embraced the *more* in a journey of pain and illness. For the last 6 years she resided at Jeanne Jugan Residence in San Pedro: a presence and a silent prayer. She died peacefully on December 11th, in the Advent time of expectant waiting.

Sister Brigid's blue eyes were sparkling, at times piercing, her smile vibrant, and her laughter spontaneous. She was very serious when playing her favorite game of cards: 110. She loved to cook and bake, and for years she created magnificent Christmas fruitcakes.

While we are saddened at her loss, we rejoice and we give thanks for we know that the more of Brigid's heart's desire is fulfilled as she is welcomed by the One who calls her by name.

Cluny Affiliate

Richard Travis Atkins III

Travis and Mary Ellen Atkins received spiritual affiliation with Cluny many years ago because of their long standing relationship with us and their generous support of Cluny School, attended by their four children, and of our province. Travis also contributed hands-on assistance that enabled the school and province office

to usher in the age of computers. He would good arrive with a smile whenever needed, the solution soon to follow!

He and Mary Ellen have been for us witnesses of deep faith and family love. We are richer for our relationship with them, and we are saddened by Travis' death. He was welcomed into eternal life on September 23, 2012.



Guinea: A Field Ripe for the Harvest

Sister Regina Brunelle



A Guinean mother and little girl.

Photo courtesy of friendsofguinea.org. Used with permission.

Imagine yourself one of a group of twenty called to evangelise a population of 10,057,975 people spread over 94,981 sq. miles. Challenging? You bet! But that's exactly what Cluny Sisters in the Republic of Guinea (sometimes called Guinea-Conakry) are trying to do. Their call has scattered them in small groups from Conakry, 600 km. east to Kankan in the west.

The Sisters labor in this vast mission field where only 10% of the population is Christian (mostly Roman Catholic). Like Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, they see education as the best road to liberation so several of the Sisters engage in this ministry in Conakry, Katakco, and Mamou. In Conakry, the school, which welcomes children of all races and creeds, serves more than a thousand children from

kindergarten through to the technical level. Catechetics as a vehicle for the development of the whole person is also an important ministry wherever the Sisters find themselves.

Faithful to Cluny tradition, they respond as well to many unmet needs in healthcare and pastoral ministry. Healthcare in the schools and pastoral ministry in parishes and hospitals flourish in Conakry, Boffa, Katakco and Kankan. In Boffa 40 girls attending the parish school are sheltered by the Sisters. In Katakco the community of four Sisters is the only group of women religious in the area.

Mamou is located 200 km from Conakry. Forty years ago, Cluny had a school here but the school was taken over by the government. It was returned to the Congregation in 2010, so the Sisters are back again providing education to the children and reaching out to the community.

Farthest from the Conakry hub, two Sisters labor in Kankan. One teaches in the diocesan school while the other cares for the sick in two Health Centers and the local prison. She is often called upon to heal not only physical ills also to address mental health crises such as attempted suicide. Kankan is a university town open to students of neighbouring countries who are happy to find a welcoming church there. Being in the minority, Christians in Guinea often experience prejudice,

harassment and even persecution. Christian families as well as local parishes welcome young Christians coming from the outlying villages. In spite of the many challenges they face here, the Sisters in Kankan do tremendous work in Youth Ministry.

Feeling breathless? So do Cluny Sisters in Guinea-Conakry! "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." Won't you ask the Lord of the harvest to send many laborers to join them? (Maybe you might be one of them!) This year, four Guinean novices made their profession in Senegal where interested women are sent for formation. May the measure of peace being enjoyed in the country at the moment allow them a fruitful ministry in their native land!

If you would like to share in the harvest of this mission or feel called to support these future missionaries address your donation to:

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Bringing Hope & Compassion

Passing on the Light of Faith

Every year is a “year of faith”. The 2013 Province Calendar celebrates the lives of thirteen of our Cluny Sisters recognized for the different ways they passed on the light of faith to others. Some lived in the 1800’s; others are alive today. You can read their stories on our website and you can turn the pages of the 2013 Calendar. (http://cluniusandcanada-org.securec10.ezhostingserver.com/pages/cluny_news_province_calendar.html) May their lives inspire you and encourage you in your journey of faith. Any stories you may have of Cluny Sisters passing on the light of faith are most welcome! Please direct to our Editor, Sister Regina Brunelle. (See Page 2.)



Cluny Circle of Love (Continued)

To be eligible, mothers must be at least 18 years old and have a minor child in custody and be drug-free and sober for at least six months. Mothers who are victims of domestic violence within the previous six months are referred to a domestic violence shelter.

The involvement of Cluny Sisters at Lucy’s Hearth began in the mid 90’s. Soon, the Ursuline Sisters from New Rochelle, NY joined us. They provided funds for needed items and involved the Peer Ministers and other students at the Ursuline School in New Rochelle. Each Christmas, they come with a van filled with baskets overflowing with

goods, not forgetting lots of toys for the children and babies. It is exciting to see the van arrive at our convent where we fill the remaining spaces with baskets the Javouhey House Community and Provincial House supply. The staff and volunteers tell us we keep them going all year with the items that fill their shelves for families in need.

The mission of Lucy’s Hearth is right in line with our own belief as women religious that every Christian is called to continue the mission of Jesus in the world by recognizing and promoting as he did, the dignity of every human person.

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