

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

Connections

Welcome, Sister Genevieve Marie!

We rejoice in your "Yes" to serve
as our province leader, and we
pray you will be richly blessed
in your ministry among us.



Photo: Sister Marie Cooper

Sister Genevieve Marie Vigil

Cluny Connections asked Sister
Genevieve to introduce herself.

On Nov. 11, 2020, I began my ministry as Provincial in the United States and Canada, following Sr. Luke. For eight years Sister Luke generously gave of her time and energy in leading us through ministry challenges, the loss of sisters as they departed for heaven and the challenges of the Congregation as missionary disciples. We are deeply grateful to her.

I'm sure that this new chapter in my life, as with all my other ministries, will bring many graces and blessings. After 30 years in the Los Angeles area with a variety of educational ministries, I have come back east again. During my life in the Congregation, I have lived and served in Newport, Rhode Island; Port-of-Spain, Trinidad; Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Wilmington, Downey, Torrance, and San Pedro, California.

I have had the privilege of working with children and teenagers through education at both the elementary and high school levels in traditional Catholic Schools. I have also worked in the Los Angeles Unified School District in the Adult Learners Programs and with new immigrants, and in Los Angeles County with alternative educational programs along with mentoring young teachers in the California Credentials Program.

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From the Editor's Desk



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Thank you.

We are blessed that our founder, Anne Marie Javouhey, was a great letter writer. Her 1,000+ letters provide a rich source of wisdom for us today as we read the "thought for the day" each morning. Sister Rachel is the artist who created our graphic below to illustrate one of her thoughts.

Change seems to be the byword as several of our sisters have "flown" to new communities recently. Sister Luke, our former province leader, has joined our community in Norwich, CT. Sister Genevieve has moved to the Provincial House from California. Sisters Mary Josephine, Mary Patrice, Ena and Loretto have moved from Mary Star Convent to the retreat house of the Little Sisters of the Poor in San Pedro, CA. And Sister Joan, appointed General Secretary, has moved to Paris. (It is not necessary to write in French, though, Sister Joan still understands Canadian.) The rest of us are still at the same addresses – we all welcome any communication!

Last spring, we introduced you to two novices, Sisters Augustina and Rose. We are delighted to celebrate their profession of first vows and that of three other novices.

Sister Anne Marie



*A Sister of St. Joseph of Cluny
should be like a bird on a branch,
ready to fly
at the first sign of obedience.*

(Saying ascribed to Bl. Anne Marie Javouhey)

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Carrying on Our Mission in Difficult Times

Sister Marie Cooper

As we mentioned in our last issue of Cluny Connections, life and ministry during this time of the pandemic requires many adjustments, from increased efforts to reach out to those in need with food supplements, mask-making, to using new technology. Here are some more examples of our adaptation.

Changing Platforms

COVID-19 has brought us many new experiences as well as a new vocabulary. We are invited to a multiplicity of web experiences via Skype, Zoom and other platforms, so we “zoom” while sitting at a computer screen. School children, students, parents, teachers, and those working from home have been challenged by this sudden switch to online learning.

Unfortunately, neither can the presenter enjoy the beauty of the participants’ environment, nor can the participants engage in the same type of personal interaction.

This switch has reduced my carbon footprint, as travel was cancelled. But while the speedy evolution of platforms has greatly facilitated reaching across seas and continents, and saved cancellations of retreats, I also find it rather uncomfortable. Audience feedback is minimal, especially when everyone is wearing a mask! As I led an eight-day Contemplative Cluny Charism retreat for the sisters in Papeete, and a day of recollection for our sisters in Peru about Blessed Anne Marie and Care for Creation, I prayed to the Holy Spirit to span the chasm between us and to make up for the personal interaction we would have enjoyed in an in-person experience.



Photo: Sister Marie-Joseph Ikai / Sister Marie Cooper

How different! The sisters in Papeete gathered before this screen each day for retreat reflections coming from Newport, RI—six time zones away.



Photo: Sister Marie-Joseph Ikai

Sisters in Papeete celebrating a Mass of Thanksgiving at the closing of the retreat.

Sister Genevieve (Con’t)

In all of these situations I have come to know the power of God’s grace working in so many different ways. Therefore I come to my new ministry with a sense of excitement as I await the new experiences with my sisters.

Our last General Chapter reminded and challenged us to assume our role as missionary disciples in new and more relevant ways. I look forward to serving and living with my Cluny sisters in new and creative ways as we live the spirit of Blessed Anne Marie, bringing hope and compassion to our broken world through our missionary hearts and hands.

We assure you, dear Sister, of our prayerful support!

Province of New Zealand/Philippines: Twin Profession Ceremonies

Sister Marie Cooper



Photo: Province of New Zealand/Philippines

L-R Sisters Augustina Yang (Beijing, China), Rose Dan Yu (Beijing China), Gabrielle O'Neill (Ireland), Allison Macalister, Province Leader (Fiji-European), Roida Sinaga (Indonesia), Emeli Marafono (Rotuman, Fiji).

We rejoice with the sisters of New Zealand/Philippines as five novices profess vows in two profession ceremonies in two countries of the province. The twin ceremonies were a result of COVID-19.

Sisters Augustina, Rose and Roida were assigned to a community in New Zealand for a period of community experience. Sisters Vaviola and Anamaria were assigned to a community in Cook Islands for their community experience.

Unable to return to the novitiate at the end of the community experience, they remained in the communities to complete their preparation.

Sisters Vaviola and Anamaria made profession in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

Sisters Augustina, Rose and Roida made profession in Tauranga, New Zealand.

You may recall that in our Spring 2020 issue, as novices, Sisters Augustina and Rose shared their vocation stories.

For more information on the Province of New Zealand/Philippines see: <https://www.clunysisters.org.nz/>



Photo: Province of New Zealand/Philippines

Sister Vaviola Babakula Fijian and Sister Anamaria Irava (Rotuman, Fiji)



Photo: Province of New Zealand/Philippines

Sisters Luisa, Vaviola, Elizabeth, and Anamaria

Cluny Sisters in Cook Islands Featured in *Global Sisters Report*

Global Sisters Report is an independent, non-profit source of news and information about Catholic sisters and the critical issues facing the people they serve. Their network of journalists report about the sisters' lives and works, and sisters write commentaries from their perspectives. Our Cluny Sister, Elizabeth Browne-Russell's article "The view from Cook Islands in the South Pacific, so far COVID-free" was published on December 10, 2020 in the *National Catholic Reporter*, and on line. You can read it here: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/coronavirus/column/view-cook-islands-south-pacific-so-far-covid-free>.

Cook Islands: No COVID, but no Tourism

In her article, Sister Elizabeth describes the changes brought about by the pandemic. Because the country quickly closed borders to tourists, COVID-19 has not touched this island nation. However, the global pandemic has affected the people in many ways and has caused many to reflect on what is most important in life.

While the economy has been affected, Sister Elizabeth also sees a positive outcome of the confinement. The environment has benefitted—home and community gardens provide food for families, and make produce available at low cost in local markets.



Photo: Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell

Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell, SJ



Photo: Sister Elizabeth Browne-Russell

A group gathers to plant a field of cassava from which tapioca is extracted.

Year of Prayer for the Canonization of Blessed Anne Marie

In our last newsletter, we invited you to join us in praying for the canonization of our founder, Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey, and to let us know of any graces or favors you have received through her intercession, or through the ministry of Cluny Sisters.

We have also been posting articles on line to introduce Blessed Anne Marie and help our readers get to know her better. You might be interested in one of these:

Blessed Anne Marie – A Historical Perspective

In the midst of the French Revolution that broke out when she was only ten years old, and the “white terror” that spread across the country, the teen-age Nanette (as they called her) asked herself, “For whom am I willing to live?” and “For what am I willing to die?” The experience of these years played an important role in her adult choices.

Blessed Anne Marie and the Holy Will of God

Blessed Anne Marie was grounded in the assurance of God’s love for her and for all people. Convinced that God had sought her out to contribute to God’s great plan of love – God’s Reign – it was her greatest desire to live out that calling. For her, that was God’s Will.

Blessed Anne Marie – A Contemplative in Action

After a time spent in a monastery of Trappist nuns, Anne Marie discerned that she was not called to monastic life. She took the contemplative dimension of the monastery into a very active life. Her fidelity to prayer sustained her in the many challenges she faced, including excommunication for two years while in South America. Anne Marie desired that all Cluny Sisters might have the interior spirit of a Carmelite.

Blessed Anne Marie and Care for Creation

A farmer’s daughter, Anne Marie was close to the land. She plowed fields, sowed seed, and delighted in seeing the green shoots sprout forth. She anguished during long droughts and delighted in



An artist’s rendering of Blessed Anne Marie and the children of the world.

the harvests. During the years in Mana, French Guiana, she set up an agricultural model that at the same time respected creation, provided food for the residents, and contributed to a sustainable economy.

Blessed Anne Marie and COVID-19

The experience of the current pandemic may be the most challenging experience of our lives, even of our century. Anne Marie did not have this overwhelming experience. Instead, she lived through wave after wave of challenging events: political upheavals, foreign occupation, jealousy, libel, slander, and opposition by clergy and bishops. How did she discover God’s Will in all these trials?

What Are Cluny Sisters Saying about Blessed Anne Marie?

Blessed Anne Marie continues to be an inspiration to every woman who joins our congregation. This slide presentation provides insight into who she is for those who have responded to the call to mission as Cluny Sisters.

You can read and download these and future articles here:
<https://mailchi.mp/46caf1810060/sagqnolv23>

OUR THANKS TO ALL OUR DONORS WHO REACH OUT WITH US TO KEEP TOUCHING ONE HEART AT A TIME! AND THIS YEAR IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER!

We continue to be stretched beyond our usual ministries in responding to those in need. And we are most grateful to all our donors for your generous support.

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When we were hungry ...



When I was in trouble ...



When you comforted us in our loss ...



When you got me shoes. Now I can play with the other kids ...



When I was so lonely ...



When I'm alone I look forward to our Facetime chats ...



When I was sick ...



When we were cold ...

Sisters On the Move



During 2020 many sisters moved on to new ministries or to a new living arrangement. Our sisters of the Mary Star of the Sea Community in San Pedro, California left the Mary Star Parish Convent at the request of the pastor. Sister Genevieve assisted Sisters Mary Josephine, Ena and Mary Patrice with move into the retreat house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and Sister Loretto with her move into the Little Sisters' assisted living facility. This means that the four sisters are living on the same property and not far from the parish. Sister Genevieve then crossed the country to take up her new ministry as our province leader and resides at the Provincial House in Middletown RI. After completing her mandate as province leader, Sister Luke joined our community in Connecticut. Sister Joan responded to a new ministry at our Generalate in Paris, serving as General Secretary. We thank them all for their generous response and assure them of the support of our prayers.

Sister Genevieve Marie Vigil

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Bringing Hope & Compassion

Sisters in Papua New Guinea Celebrate 50th Anniversary

Congratulations to our sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea! We rejoice with you and give thanks for your witness as Missionary Disciples. May God continue to bless you and your people.

In 1971, Sister Josephine O’Kelly and Sister Gwen Daw made their first journey from Australia to Kanabea village on a mountainside in Gulf. This foundation was a response to a request from Bishop Knox, who was Archbishop of Melbourne at that time. The sisters were soon joined by Sister Bernadette Gautier.

Today sisters from Papua New Guinea, Australia, India, and the Philippines serve the people of Kerema, Bema, Kotidanga and Kaintiba in the mountains of Gulf. Their ministries include education, advocacy outreach, and social justice.

Region leader, Sister Rachel Arputham, said, “As we celebrate the 50 years of our presence here in Papua New Guinea, we give glory to God for the wonders He has done through us for our people, and we thank all those who have been part of this faith journey.”



Photo: Sister Fatima Mafu

Education in Care for our Common Home:
Sister Fatima Mafu with students demonstrating
their poster on the importance of land and sea
conservation.