

## Mental Health Awareness

Therese Wallace, Cluny Associate - Hamilton, ON Canada



Mary Jean Marcuzzi and Therese Wallace present at Saints Peter and Paul Parish

**A**s we tentatively emerge from the sorrows and difficulties of a global pandemic and discover ourselves amid a world in turmoil and anguish, the topic of mental health and well-being is timely for us all.

A better understanding of mental illness and addictions in the context of our faith helps to equip us with insight and prepares individuals and communities to reach out with compassion and care to those among us who may be struggling with mental health issues.

Earlier this year, we became aware of an educational resource entitled The Sanctuary Course for Catholics, a series of seven 30-minute videos designed to raise awareness and begin conversations about mental health and mental illness within our parishes. As long-time spiritual care

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## A Blessed New Year to All!

**T**his edition of *Cluny Connections* is, in a sense, all about new beginnings. Our Canadian Associates introduce their ministry advocating for the mentally ill.

We remember Sister Bernadette as she entered into new life last September. Cluny Sisters in French Polynesia came together for their annual retreat, a time to begin again, renewing the vows we seek to live each day. Then they stayed on in assembly to look back, evaluate, and discern God's call into the future.

In Advent, the Church called us to begin again, to prepare for the coming of Christ in our lives today and to prepare for His coming in glory. Pope Francis dedicated this year it as a year of prayer to prepare for the Jubilee Year of 2025.

This year, the Gospel of Mark will be proclaimed on Sundays. While the stories are familiar, we may sense the urgency in his telling of the story of the Good News unless we've followed its unfolding. The Gospel of Mark begins with the affirmation that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God, and a voice from heaven affirms, "You are my Son, the Beloved." There it is, you have it in two verses! What is left to tell? The inspired author continues for sixteen more chapters to tell us who He is.

Who is Jesus the Christ for you? Perhaps you're invited to a new beginning: to spend time with the Gospel of Mark as it unfolds in the liturgy, meeting the "Son, the Beloved". If you feel so inclined, we offer some resources on Page 3. Whatever you decide, may you have a deepening sense of the Beloved at your side each day of the unfolding year.

*Sister Marie*

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# In Memoriam

## Sister Bernadette of Mary Immaculate Queen Lapre

**O**n Monday, September 25, Sister Bernadette Lapre gently and quietly went home to God at St. Clare Home in Newport, RI.

She is survived by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, her sister Auora Lajoie, and her brother Normand Lapre, and numerous nieces, nephews, grand nieces and nephews from different parts of the United States.

Marie Bernadette Elmiere was born to Wilfred A. Lapre and Marie Nerea Trahen Lapre in Fall River on March 9, 1933. She was one of 16 children. Sister Bernadette loved her family often told stories about each one. Her family found support in their loving sister and aunt. Upon entering the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, August 15, 1962, she became Sister Bernadette of Mary Immaculate Queen. Sister Bernadette served in Rhode Island and in France.

There were two big events in Sister Bernadette's life of which she was very proud. She left school to help support her family but persisted in her efforts to earn her High School Diploma. The other big event was traveling to Washington, DC to testify before the House Appropriations Sub-Committee on behalf of medical coverage for elderly patients suffering from mental illness. As she told and re-told the stories, it was hard to tell which she considered her greatest achievement.

She had many friends from different walks of life because of her outgoing and generous nature. She



**Sister Bernadette Lapre**

never ceased to pray for each of those who were in her life. Her consistent gift for her Sisters, family, friends and all those in need was her deep and sincere prayer. Often as she said a Rosary, she would mention the intended person by name. She will be deeply missed, by her Cluny Sisters, family, friends and the "other family" of St. Clare Home. The staff of St. Clare cared for Sister Bernadette with affection and understanding. We are all deeply grateful.

Sister Bernadette was a big part of our lives in the communities where she served, as well as later when she resided at St. Clare Home. She is fondly remembered by the sisters who knew her in France, and we here in the States all miss her very much.

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## Resources for the Gospel of Mark

*Mark: Growing in Faith.* Fr. David P. Reid, SSCC and Deacon Charles Paolino. RENEW International. [www.renewintl.org](http://www.renewintl.org)

*Ponder: Contemplative Bible Study Year B* by M. Leonard-Fleckman. Little Rock Scripture Study [littlerockscripture.org](http://littlerockscripture.org).

*Abiding Word: Sunday Reflections for Year B.* Sister Barbara E. Reid, OP. Liturgical Press. [www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

*The Gospel of Mark: A Spiritual and Pastoral Reading.* Homilies by Pope Francis. Orbis Books. <https://orbisbooks.com>

# Cluny Sisters – Region of French Polynesia

## Annual Retreat

### Eight Days Walking with Women Who Encountered Jesus

Sister Marie-Joseph Ikai, Region Leader, invited Sister Marie Cooper to lead the contemplative retreat and to facilitate the Region Assembly that followed. During the retreat the sisters contemplated Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Samaritan Woman, the Woman Accused of Adultery, Martha and Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John, as well as two women in distress - the crippled woman in the synagogue in Luke, and the Canaanite woman who begged for her daughter's healing in Matthew.



Left to right: Row 1 – Sisters Céline, Marie Claire, Maile, Gisèle, Noëlla, Marietta and Marguerite. Row 2 – Sisters Marie-Joseph Voirin, Hélène, Régine, Lydia, Soana, Blandine\*, Salomé, Marie, Christiane, Yvette\* and Marie-Joseph Ikai. (\*Sisters of Jésus-Sauveur)

## Celebrating 60 Years at Anne Marie Javouhey School – Raiatea The School that owes its foundation to persistent parents and a strike!

Cluny Sisters first arrived on the island of Raiatea (a 45 minute flight from Papeete, Tahiti) almost 100 years ago. They founded an elementary school that was greatly appreciated by Catholics and Protestants alike. Sixty years ago as Sister Noëlla, who was there at the time, tells the story, the parents begged the sisters to expand to a middle and high school. The sisters' petition to the Ministry of Catholic Schools French Polynesia was turned down. The parents were disappointed, but persisted. Word began to spread across the islands. Then it happened: the

very first strike in Polynesia! 100% of all the Catholic school employees called a strike. The ministry ceded, and Anne Marie Javouhey School was founded. Today the school thrives with the support of both Catholic and Protestant parents.

Celebrations began with Mass, followed by the blessing of the classrooms, and a lunch. Entertainment, provided by students and staff, included traditional music and dance and a beautiful tribute to Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey by a high school student.

Continued on Page 5

## Region Assembly: *Together Setting the World on Fire with Love and Hope*

After the retreat, the sisters of the region stayed on to reflect in assembly on the past six years and the present life of the region, and planned for the future. At the Closing Mass, Sister Marie-Joseph, Region Leader, commissioned each sister to go out to set the world on fire with love and hope.



Left to right: Sisters Christiane, Noëlla, Régine, and Céline



Left to right: Sisters Soana, Pierre Chanel, Maile, and Marietta



Sisters Marie Claire, Lydia, and Marguerite



Commissioning – Sister Marie-Joseph, the Regional Leader, offers the flame to Sister Lydia to take out into the world.

## 60 Years (Continued from Page 4)



Sister Marie-Joseph Voirin leads the children and musicians at the opening Mass.



Students perform a traditional dance.

A student offers an homage to Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey



# News Briefs from Around the World

## SIERRA LEONE



Sr. Jannie Pormai made her final religious profession.



Cluny Sisters celebrated the 200th anniversary of Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey's visit to Sierra Leone.

## SPAIN

Cluny Vigo



Medal winners in the Winter Games

Cluny Pozuelo



Students engage in a workshop on collaborative entrepreneurship

## PERU



Celebrations for the birthday of Blessed Anne Marie and the 59th anniversary of Blessed Anne Marie school of Callao, Lima.

## Mental Health Awareness (Continued from Page 1)



### **Therese Wallace leading the presentation**

volunteers in our regional psychiatric facility, Cluny Associates Mary Jean Marcuzzi and Therese Wallace prepared and submitted a proposal to the Hamilton Diocese to leverage our volunteer experience with a pilot presentation of the Sanctuary Course for Catholics locally at Saints Peter and Paul Parish.

In September 2023, over a 4-week period, we facilitated the Sanctuary Course for Catholics following Sunday morning Mass with the support and hospitality of parish volunteers. Topics included mental health and mental illness, stigma, recovery, companionship, self-care, and community. Each session included screening of two short films that featured the stories of Catholics living with mental health challenges, along with the insights of archbishops, theologians, and psychologists. Following each video, we talked about the theme presented, listened to personal stories, and answered many questions. Information about local area mental health clinics and supports were made available too. It was extremely well-received by the group of 25 people who attended the program. The program itself was rich in content and adaptable to the needs of the group. Hopefully other parishes within the diocese may consider offering this course, a blessing to individuals and families who have been suffering silently.

While the topic of mental illness has long been a taboo subject, it has become especially important and urgent in Canada to raise awareness about mental health and mental illness. The Government of Canada is adding to existing legislation, mental illness as a sole condition to qualify and obtain Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD), also known as euthanasia [in effect on March 17, 2024]. Most recently, discussions are underway about including drug addiction as a qualifier for euthanasia and allowing so-called mature minors (age 14 to 17 years) to choose assisted suicide. Ominously, Canadians are staring down the path of death-on-demand, the path running parallel to the reality of abortion-on-demand in this country. This insidious legislation is a clear and present danger to the lives of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters and is sad testimony to the loss of a sense of sanctity of life in the secular society of Canada.

Please pray for us!

Note: The Sanctuary Course for Catholics is available on the digital platform FORMED.org. The Sanctuary Course for Catholics, © 2021 by Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries [www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org](http://www.sanctuarymentalhealth.org)



**Tess and Sheila Mahoney of Saints Peter and Paul Parish offering hospitality**



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*Bringing Hope & Compassion*



**Hilda says, "Thank, you, Sisters!"**

**We say, "Thank you, dear friends.  
Because of you, we are making a  
difference in the lives of many who  
feel forgotten in their struggles."**

## **ANNUAL APPEAL 2023 Bringing Hope and Compassion One Encounter at a Time**

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throughout the New Year, 2024.

Please refer to the details for sending  
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Please remember the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny in your will. Thank you.