

## The Emmaus Walk: A Welcome Prayer Experience

Therese Wallace  
Canadian Cluny Affiliate



**Front Row, left to right: Maureen Harper, Linda Pandzich, Mary Jean Marcuzzi**  
**Back Row, left to right: Sr. Marie, Jayne Kennedy, Shirley Johnson, Terry Wallace**  
**Unavailable: Erma Callender**

On June 11, 2024, Sr. Marie Cooper joined us in Hamilton ON at the newly constructed St. Catherine of Siena Parish where Cluny Associates have found a new home and meeting space. Our Cluny Day of Prayer began with Mass celebrated by Pastor Fr. Mark Gatto and followed with a retreat prepared and led by Sr. Marie. Our Emmaus Walk included a video presentation, reflection on the Gospel Luke 24:13-35. Personal prayer and a time of sharing with one another two by two like the disciples on the road to Emmaus drew us more deeply into this beautiful Easter story. A pot-luck luncheon provided us a time for good food and social conversation.

The theme of our retreat, I AM With You on the Journey, proved to be exactly the encouragement and refreshment we Hamilton Associates needed following a long stretch of personal losses, ill health, and exhaustive care giving. In the wake of the recent pandemic and cocooned in our own miseries, a sense of isolation and disconnectedness from one another had crept in. Each one of us was searching for the One standing next to us, the One always ready to break open the scriptures for us, to console, to strengthen, and to encourage us, and to reaffirm the bonds that unite us in loving community and mutual support. "And they recognized Him in the Breaking of the Bread" St. Luke tells us. (Luke 24:31) We, too recognized him, in the Eucharist, the scripture and in our prayer and sharing.

We are all very grateful to God for sending us Sr. Marie for a wonderful day of prayer and reflection that sent us on our way spiritually renewed and refreshed! Thank-you Sr. Marie!

## In this Issue

The Emmaus Walk

Cluny Sister Appointed  
First Woman  
Head of Caritas Nepal

Sisters in Sierra Leone  
Reach Out:  
The School for the  
Hearing Impaired

A Program for Ebola  
Survivors

Province of  
the West Indies:

Pilgrimage to Mana  
Retreat in Tobago

Cluny General Chapter  
in Paris

Care for Creation:  
The Great Elephant  
Migration



## Gather all God's Children into One Loving Family

This issue takes you around the world to witness some of our Cluny Sisters' ministries and activities.

To do God's Will was central to the life and spirituality of Blessed Anne Marie, our founder. Wherever she and her sisters went, they welcomed everyone, especially those who were considered last and least. In a letter to her sisters, she stated that this was God's Will – to gather all God's children into God's loving family. In another letter from Paris in 1848, during the bloody revolution known as The Commune, she wrote, "We discover God's Will in the circumstances we have not sought out." Over 200 years later, Cluny Sisters around the world continue to gather together God's children in the circumstances in which they find themselves.

We begin our tour with our Associates in Hamilton, Ontario and continue until we return here to Newport, welcoming the Elephant Migration. In Nepal, Sister Durga Cecilia Shresth, a social worker, is the first woman to head Caritas Nepal. Next, we take you to West Africa, where sisters in Sierra Leone gather families who were ostracized because they survived after being stricken with the Ebola virus and children who are hearing-impaired.

Our next stop is Mana in French Guiana, a living reminder of our call to gather all God's children, with Cluny Associates and Sisters from Trinidad, West Indies. Then we stop at our Spirituality and Wellness Center in Tobago, where the sisters of the Province of West Indies gathered in retreat in July, before a stop in Paris, where our Cluny leadership and elected delegates gathered to set the path for the congregation for the next six years. Finally we come back here to Newport.

I hope that you will enjoy this "Cluny tour", and that as you contemplate the photos and read the comments, you will remember us all in prayer, that in whatever circumstances we have not sought out, we may continue to gather all God's children and help lead them into a future of hope.

*Sister Marie*

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

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## Cluny Sister Durga Cecilia Shrestha Appointed Director of Caritas Nepal



(Courtesy photo. Used with permission.)

**Sister Durga Cecilia Shrestha (center), the first woman executive director of Caritas Nepal seen at a program with beneficiaries.**

“In 2008, Sister Durga Cecilia graduated in social work in Kathmandu and went back to Kalimpong to work as a help line coordinator under the Ministry of Women and Children. For the next four years, she worked for the betterment of child laborers and their families by rescuing, rehabilitating, and providing education to them. ‘It was a fulfilling experience as a social worker,’ she recalled.

Her dedicated work for underprivileged and marginalized women and children led her to become a board member of Opportunity Village Nepal, a non-governmental organization run by the Good Shepherd nuns. She went on to become its director.

“It was a turning point for me as I was exposed to the plight of underage girls and young women being trafficked both within the country and outside,” Shrestha said.

“This [appointment] is a big recognition for me and all other aspiring women, who want to showcase their talent and work towards the welfare of communities.”

The above story is an excerpt from a longer article that appeared in *Global Sisters Report*. Read the full story here: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/religious-life/nepali-sister-becomes-first-woman-head-caritas-nepal>



**TO HOPE AND ACT  
WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2024

*The firstfruits of hope*  
(Rom 8:19-25)

### Pray the Way of Creation

Similar to how the Way of the Cross commemorates the mystery of the Passion, the *Way of Creation* commemorates the mystery of Creation by reading side by side the two sacred books that God wrote: the Book of Scripture and the Book of the Cosmos.

Download free here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IYnaZousEYsn1RjoM9PpeDBzjtKqsdXLHtP62Y5-c98/edit>



## Outreach to Ebola Survivors in Sierra Leone



GSR Photo/Doreen Ajiambo. Used with permission

**Sister Victoria Amie Tholley consoles Nana Kamara**

“Sister Victoria Amie Tholley, a member of Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, consoles Nana Kamara in Makeni, Sierra Leone, on Sept. 20, 2023. Kamara is among thousands of Ebola survivors who have been rejected by their families and communities after the Ebola outbreak that hit Sierra Leone in 2014.

“The awareness campaign by the sisters made people slowly start accepting us back into the community,” Kamara said. “The process took some time, but we are now seeing progress. We can freely interact with others without being criticized or chased away.”

“Kamara is among thousands of Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone whom dozens of Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny continue to help and reintegrate into their communities nearly a decade after the World Health Organization, or WHO, declared the country free of Ebola transmission.”

From *Global Sisters Report*. Read the full story here: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/sierra-leone-catholic-sisters-support-ebola-survivors-facing-stigma>

### Our Thanks to *Global Sisters Report*

We are grateful to Sister Joyce Meyers and everyone at the Global Sisters Report Project which highlighted some of our Cluny Sisters, publishing their stories and making known their work and their achievements. The photos and information on Pages 3, 4, and 5 are used with their permission. The following description is found on their website:

“*Global Sisters Report* is an independent, nonprofit source of news and information about Catholic sisters and the critical issues facing the people they serve. Our network of journalists report about their lives and works, and sisters write commentary from their perspective.

Continued on Page 5

## School for the Hearing Impaired in Sierra Leone



GSR photo/Doreen Ajiambo. Used with permission.

Sister Amala Raneesantiago interacts with children at St Joseph's School for the Hearing Impaired in Makeni, a town in northern Sierra Leone.

“[Sister Amala Raneesantiago] said the institution, which currently has more than 250 students, admits all deaf and hard of hearing children regardless of religion. She said the school offers hope for many children to thrive academically, socially and emotionally in the community, which does not consider them worth educating. Most of the children here are abandoned. Their parents come

and abandon them without even essential toiletries, and they never return. The life skills we offer help them be independent people in the future and live normal lives.”

From *Global Sisters Report*. Read the full story here: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/qa-sr-amala-raneesantiago-caring-hard-hearing-children-sierra-leone>

### Our Thanks to *Global Sisters Report* (Continued)

“A project of National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, Global Sisters Report is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, and is funded by grants from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation.

For the past 10 years, Global Sisters report has published thousands of stories about these women who embody “faith in action.” The GSR in the Classroom project is funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the GHR Foundation.”

Read more here: <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/lcwr-honors-sr-nancy-schreck-who-spent-decades-serving-sisters-and-rural-poor>



# Pilgrimage to Mana



Magdalena de Freitas behind Sr. Anne, Barbara Salazar, Corinne Soo Ping Chow, Shirley Johnson, Sister Clare Harris, and back right Yolande Medina, Thayne de Lima, and Roslind Pacheco.

Hundreds of Africans, captured to be sold into slavery, were instead welcomed into a sanctuary of peace and freedom by Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey in 1835 in the French Colony of Guiana on the northeastern coast of South America. She named the free town Mana – bread from heaven—where over 500 Africans were given political freedom and a future of hope. Recently Sisters Clare Harris and Anne Keens-Douglas of the Province of the West Indies accompanied Cluny Associates on a pilgrimage to Mana.

The Associates shared the following reflections upon their return home:

“I felt Blessed Anne Marie’s presence in the simplicity and quiet of everyday life.” (Magdalena de Freitas-John)

“I experienced a feeling of peace and contentment, and my prayer life has been enhanced since my visit to Mana.” (Shirley Johnson)

“I was impressed by the simplicity of the lifestyle in French Guiana and the joy the Sisters demonstrated in their service and sacrifice. I found the nature trails in the footsteps of Blessed Anne Marie refreshing and invigorating.” (Corinne Soo Ping Chow)

## Crest of the City of Mana



The arm of an African is linked to Mother Javouhey with a gold chain. At the center of a rosary, two serpents depict rejection of old superstitions. To the left is a pitcher and to the right a barrel representing the manufacturing of fine Mana rum (pipi masso). (Blessed Anne Marie assisted freed prisoners from Devil’s Island establish a rum distillery so they could be self-supporting.) At the bottom are palm branches.

The motto of Mana, not pictured here, is: *Great love conquers all evil.*

## Pilgrimage to Mana (Continued)



### Mana Town Square

The church which Blessed Anne Marie built dominates the town square. Her bust, set on a pillar of stone, acknowledges that she is the “Founder and Mother” of Mana. Her first sojourn in French Guiana took place in 1828, when she established a community of sisters. She returned again in 1835 to initiate the project of liberation and remained until 1843, when the first Africans were granted enfranchisement. Mana remained the only free town.

The people of Mana later welcomed Hmong refugees, as once their ancestors had been welcomed.

You can read more about Blessed Anne Marie and the international recognition she has received for this amazing project.

<https://mailchi.mp/46caf1810060/sagqnlv23>

<https://clunyusandcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CCSpring2011.pdf>

## Retreat in Tobago



View from the Cluny Spirituality and Holistic Development Center

The Sisters of the Province of the West Indies gathered at the Tobago for an eight-day contemplative retreat led by Sister Marie Cooper. Each day was dedicated an encounter of a woman with Jesus in the Gospel of John. In the morning the group engaged in communal contemplation and contemplative dialogue on the day's theme. Then Sister Marie's reflection broke open the Gospel passage of the day. The sisters gathered again for Eucharist at the middle of the day, and for night prayer. Thanks to Sister Rosemary and her dedicated staff, they enjoyed free time each day to rest, pray quietly on their own, take walks, and listen to the voice of God within.

Center website: <http://www.clunycarib.org/tobagoretreat.html>

## Cluny Sisters from Around the World Gathered in Paris



**Sister Vanesa Manzano and Sister Maureen Alexander, Provincial, delegates of the Province of the West Indies.**

Every six years, Cluny delegates from around the world gather in General Chapter. This international meeting, held in the Mother House in Paris, is a time for prayer and discernment to seek God's Will more clearly for our future and to elect congregation leadership

Photos and more information are available on our website: <https://sj-cluny.org/The-real-work-of-the-General-Chapter-begins?lang=fr>





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*Bringing Hope & Compassion*

## The Great Elephant Migration Graces Newport, RI



Crowds enjoying the experience.

As we prepared for the Season of Creation (September 1 to October 4 when Christians around the world are praying and caring for creation), Newport, RI welcomed the migration of elephants at Salve Regina University and along the Cliff Walk bordering the Atlantic Ocean.

The Great Elephant Migration is a global fund raising adventure to amplify indigenous knowledge and inspire the human race to share space.

The project website explains that it is “A collaboration between indigenous artisans, contemporary artists, and cultural institutions. It will raise millions of dollars to power human-wildlife coexistence projects and protect migratory animals making spectacular journeys across land, rivers, skies and oceans.”

You can discover more about this amazing project here: <https://thegreatelephantmigration.org>

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