

Family of Friends

NOVEMBER 2013

*To seek out
and
advocate
for the poor
and needy,
especially
families,
for the
Kingdom
of God.*



Serving
immigrant
populations
since 1872



Photos from top: Banner used with permission from Catholic Sisters of the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Sister Maria Lucia Nieto (2nd from left in back) and her family, 1939. Unidentified Sister with children in Fresno, circa 1960. Sister Andrea Rangel with Mexican immigrant children, 1995.

President's Message

November 2013

Dear Family and Friends,

As I look out my office window, I see leaves beginning to change color and marvel that even in the Bay Area we have an experience of the changing seasons. As usual we focus on the autumn harvest - the last fruit from our garden, the raking of leaves, the celebration of our foundation in 1872 and, in our spiritual tradition, our membership in the communion of saints. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines for us those words from The Apostles' Creed, "we believe in the communion of saints," as follows:



962 *"We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are being purified, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always [attentive] to our prayers"*
(Paul VI, CPG § 30).

This fall the Sisters have focused their prayers on a particular concern for members of that communion: our immigrant population. We have been engaged in a 40 day period of fasting, prayer and action for immigration reform. Our prayer focused on these themes: *Promoting family unity and an end to deportations, Providing a pathway to citizenship, Caring for those seeking asylum and refuge, Ensuring workers' rights, Addressing the root causes of migration, and Humanizing and demilitarizing our borders.* The fruits of our reflection are shared in this issue of the "Family of Friends".

In addition, we commemorate our Sisters who were born abroad, we reflect on our spiritual heritage from "The Book of Ruth", we gather into our thoughts the beautiful words expressed by the Bishops in "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity," we ponder over our ministry experiences with immigrants during the last 141 years, and we experience how seeking out and gleaning moved us to an anti-trafficking ministry.

A few years ago while watching a documentary about the great Irish, German, and Italian migrations to the United States, the narrator used a poignant phrase, "they came seeking a promised land, not knowing that they were the promise itself." In this season of Thanksgiving, the Sisters and I wish you a season full of communion and promise acknowledging the merciful love of God and his saints.

Sincerely in the Holy Family,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Gladys Guenther". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Sister M. Gladys Guenther, SHF
Congregational President

Working for Immigration Reform

Sisters of the Holy Family have united with people of faith across the country in FAST ACTION for Immigration Reform.

From September 9 through October 18, 2013, the Sisters engaged in prayer, fasting and action aimed at urging Congress to fix our broken immigration system. In doing so we added our voices with other faith communities to enact reform that reflects the best of our values and helps to build a stronger, more welcoming country.

Sister Gladys said, "It sometimes feels like accomplishing just and compassionate immigration reform is an impossible dream. But as people of faith, we have access to a power that can 'move mountains'. From Pope Francis to bishops to local leaders, we are being asked to make every effort to advance the cause of immigration reform this year." This current stance on immigration is an extension of what the Sisters have always done...serve and care for immigrant populations.

As a symbolic beginning, on September 10th the Sisters of the Holy Family, Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose and friends gathered on the sidewalk along Mission Blvd. to hang a large banner, visible to the thousands of people passing by every day. The banner,



an adaptation of a quote from Jesus, says, "I was an immigrant and you welcomed me."

We invite you to join this continuing effort in three ways:

- Pray, in groups or in private, for just action for our excluded brothers and sisters.
- Fast by giving up something that is significant in your own life...maybe desserts, TV watching, or electronic games.
- Take action by starting or signing petitions, and contacting your representative through email, phone, or letters.

Read more at www.holyfamilysisters.org

Ruth the Immigrant

by Carol J. Crater, SHF

Ruth, a Moabite and the great-grandmother of King David, was an immigrant to Bethlehem back in the time of the judges. She accompanied her mother-in-law when the older woman returned home after the death of Naomi's husband and two sons in Moab.

Hebrew law at the time of Ruth provided for the needs of aliens and strangers, and the poor. Landowners were instructed not to harvest their land to the very edge of the field, but to leave some for the poor and the alien. They were also told not to go over the harvested fields a second time, but -- again -- to leave something for the poor and the alien.

Law or no law, Ruth could not know what to expect when she randomly selected a field for gleaning in her new land. But she chose the field of Boaz, a just and compassionate man, and -- as it turned out -- a relative of Naomi's late husband. He went beyond the requirements of the law, seeing to it that Ruth was safe and was able to gather all that she and Naomi needed, and some extra.



Such compassion regarding the welfare of immigrants in Ruth's time was included in the law because of the history of the Hebrews: "Remember, you were aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt." In Egypt, the Hebrews had experienced both rescue from famine and, much later, being impressed into slavery. Which experience of immigration did they want to remember and bring alive in their own land? Their laws protecting aliens and strangers are eloquent answers to that question.

Reflection question: In reforming our immigration laws today, what experience of immigration do we want to bring alive for those who come to our shores?

Sisters Work with Immigrants

*One bread, one body,
one Lord of all,
one cup of blessing
which we bless.*

*And we, though many,
throughout the earth,
we are one body in
this one Lord.*

*Gentile or Jew,
servant or free,
woman or man, no
more.*

*Many the gifts,
many the works,
one in the Lord of all.*



Since the foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1872, needy families from every ethnic origin or religious affiliation have been and continue to be the most important part of who and what we are as we serve God and God's people. Many of our Sisters have ministered to immigrant families. A few of them have been interviewed to learn their stories – so diverse and yet so alike.

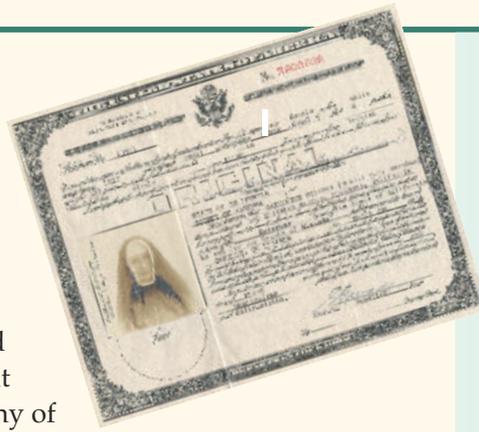
Sister Michaela O'Connor has been ministering for 22 years to the Kmhmu people from Laos. In the early 1980s, a small number of Kmhmu families settled in the city of Richmond in the Bay Area. Sister states the Kmhmu are gentle and loving people, eager to fit in this strange, but better, place to live. Although they struggle because of language difficulties and a lack of work skills, they have strong family values and help one another, often giving to their children and doing without. They love getting together for fun times trying their hardest to not just survive, but thrive in their new homeland. Sister is doing everything in her power to help make the lives of the Kmhmu people better, and she has done outstanding work. Sister Michaela is loved!

Sister Marie Ann Brent has served in different parts of Alaska for almost 40 years and has ministered to many immigrant people from the "lower 48" as well as Europe, Africa and Asia. Most of the people are loving and open-minded to the other people and their cultures. They appreciate the uprooting of so many other immigrants and the seemingly wasted wonderful education from their former lives that could not be used for work here because of language difficulties. Depression is a problem for many because their families are separated, with some in Alaska and some in their homeland.

The Archdiocese of Anchorage is helping the refugees by setting up learning stations equipped with teachers, computers, etc. for both the youth and adults – giving land for farming so people without work can grow food for their families. Sister Marie Ann has ministered, and continues to minister to the many people of Alaska. She loves her life, past and present.

Sister Angela Marie Hinckley spent many years in Utah and ministered to the migrant workers many of whom were treated badly as they worked and lived among those who had closed minds and little tolerance of those different cultures. Sister worked with these families, helping with food, clothing, the Sacraments, and whatever else was needed, along with much love and acceptance.

Sisters Diane Maguire, Barbara Sheahan, Marie Julie Casattas and Ruth Faisca set up a family Resource Center at the Variety Day Home in Las Vegas to meet a broad range of needs from immigrant families. Many families straight from Mexico, and several from Africa, came daily to the Day Home for services. Many mothers and children were served, with English classes for the parents and preschool classes for the children. Additionally,



Some of Our Sisters Were Immigrants Themselves

the families received food from the satellite food bank distribution services, plus clothing, furniture and everything they could use from what had been donated to the Sisters. Many of these families were undocumented and were in fear of being sent back to their country or being separated from their family. All of the Sisters worried about them and helped however they could. They enjoyed becoming good friends with so many of the other cultures.

Since returning to living at the Motherhouse in Fremont, Sisters Marie Julie and Diane are working with people from the Philippine Islands, Taiwan, and Central America making rosary beads. The rosaries are given to parishes for their hospital ministers, sent to their homelands and to others that request them. Everyone really enjoys gathering weekly as a multi-cultural group making rosaries.

Sister Joan Litch in Fresno works with the Kmhmu Community in the Valley; **Sister Angelina Dutra** has worked in Hawaii and Alaska with a variety of different cultures; and **Sister Marie Deering** told of the “airlift” of the children from Vietnam to the U.S. Many of these children attended Saint Vincent’s Day Home in Oakland, California, and many are still friends with the Sisters.

These stories all have a common thread. The people want a better life, they miss their homeland, families, and cultures but even more, they want acceptance in this country and a right to live, work and thrive as everyone else does. The Holy Family Sisters continue to walk alongside, support as needed, educate and pray with these wonderful people of different lands and cultures. It was, and is, a privilege to do so.



Dolores Armer	Australia
Anna Alves	Azores
Brenda Baile	Ireland
Felicitas Begley	Ireland
Kristin Bernier	Canada
Eileen Collins	Ireland
Sadoc Conway	New Zealand
Josephine Crowley	Ireland
de Sales Curtin	Ireland
Anselm Dineen	Ireland
Alexius Doyle	Ireland
Dominica Flynn	Ireland
Andre Fulham	Ireland
Veronica Gilfillan	England
Columba Grant	Ireland
Anastasia Hamil	Ireland
Germaine Handl	Croatia
Malachy Hannigan	Ireland
Concepta Hlafsa	Russia
Loretta Horgan	Canada
Magdalene Javete	Ireland
Winifred Keely	Ireland
Lucy Kelly	Ireland
Emmanuel Lawler	Ireland
Winifred Lennon	Ireland
Julia Lennon	Ireland
Philomene McNiff	Ireland
Michael Mellen	Ireland
Thaddeus Meyer	Holland
Bertrand Monaghan	Ireland
Angela Mulrone	Ireland
Antonia Murray	Ireland
Maria Lucia Nieto	Mexico
Ambrose O'Connell	Ireland
Elizabeth O'Connell	Ireland
Catherine O'Connor	Canada
Brenda Marie O'Connor	Ireland
Raymond O'Farrell	Ireland
Lawrence Powers	Ireland
Francis Marie Reilly	Ireland
Alacoque Roche	Ireland
Maria Elisa Ruiz	Mexico
Alicia Sullivan	Ireland
Roberta Van Woerkom	Holland
Ludwina Van Woerkom	Holland
Gabriel Winters	Ireland
Isabel Zurior	Canada

Reflections on Ministry with Immigrant Populations

Intersect between Human Trafficking and Immigration...Sister Caritas Foster

Human Trafficking, the exploitation of persons through labor and/or sex, is described by Pope Francis as a “despicable activity, a disgrace for our societies, which describe themselves as civilized.” Human Trafficking takes place in the United States. It does not depend on immigration status. Our own citizens can be trafficked. A person can come into our country with legal or fraudulent documents; e.g., work, student, travel visa. Upon their arrival, these documents will be taken by the exploiter and used as a means of threatening the trafficked person with deportation. A person can be smuggled into the United States, which is the violation of our border and is a crime. Human Trafficking is the violation of a person. These are two separate criminal activities. A person smuggled into the country and able to pay the debt for that action may be free to go his/her own way. A person smuggled into the country still owing a debt may be trafficked until that debt is paid.

Standing in Solidarity...Sister Elaine Marie Sanchez

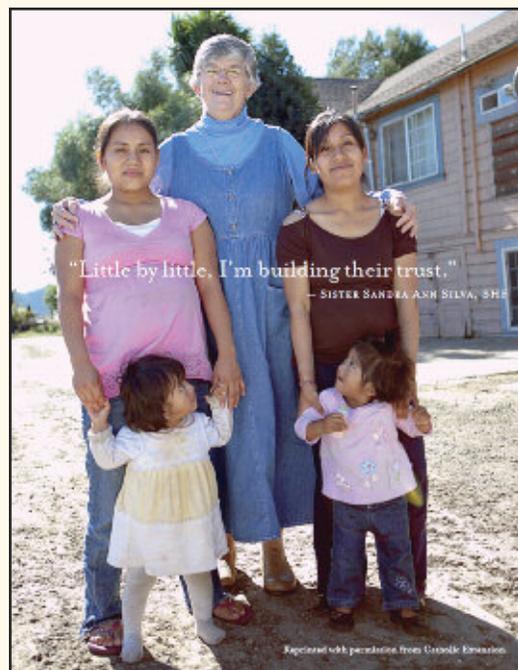
Seeking to meet God, who comes as a stranger, is our motivation as we work collaboratively with a variety of faith communities in educating, advocating and praying for compassionate Immigration Reform. This relationship has taken us in many challenging directions.

On October 5th we joined with communities across our nation on a CALL TO ACTION: National Day of Dignity and Respect. The purpose of this day was to coordinate our efforts to call on Congress to pass Immigration Reform – legislation that includes a real road map to citizenship, rules that protect workers’ rights and an end to the destruction of families through deportations.

Besides this national effort, members of the Sisters of the Holy Family joined with the Interfaith Coalition for Immigration and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, by participating in an Immigration Vigil at the West Contra Costa County Detention Facility. It was an opportunity to stand in solidarity with all immigrants especially those detained from ICE operations that have separated families that live in our communities.

Comfort Beyond Language...Sister Karen Stern

My most recent ministry to immigrants occurs in the two days a week I volunteer at Washington Hospital in Fremont. The hospital serves an area where over half the population speaks about 30 languages and dialects. In the Surgery Waiting Room gestures are as important as words as I try to give anxious and stressed families regular reports about their loved ones. Gestures, a hand on an arm or shoulder, bringing them tea, having eyes that show concern – any way that lets them know I really care for them.



In the Salinas Valley, **Sister Sandra Ann Silva** ministers to immigrant farm workers from Oaxaca, Mexico. Sister’s ministry is an oasis of care to the hundreds of people she serves. She is their advocate, teacher, community leader and spiritual companion.



Sister Brenda Marie O'Connor was passionately involved in Bread for the World for many years before her death. Bread for the World is a non-partisan collective Christian voice urging nations’ decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad by changing policies, programs and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist.

Ministry



Sister Stephen Smario

When and where have you worked with immigrant populations?

From the years 1952 to 1958 we worked from our convent home in Lemoore, California. We ministered to the migrant farm workers and their families - especially to the

children in the Avenal-Huron area, as well as our various ministries to other families scattered throughout California.

I worked with the children of migrant parents in the camps where the parents worked as crop pickers that put the produce on our tables. The spiritual needs were cared for by Monsignor James Keenan, Pastor of St. Paul's Church in Coalinga, California and our Sisters who worked with him.

What did you enjoy about the experience?

I loved my ministry working with God's poor families and children. The children were loving and receptive to hearing stories of Jesus.

What concerns arose as you ministered to immigrant communities?

We were very concerned about such poor and unlivable housing conditions and the less than minimal wages received by the migrant workers – such injustice.

How did you see our SHF charism present in the situation?

“To seek out and advocate for the poor and needy, especially families, for the kingdom of God.” Our charism was clearly seen in our ministries with the migrant workers.

One thing that remains in my memory after all these years was a very sad situation. A small child came to Sister Assumpta and to me saying “the rats ate the baby last night and the baby died.” (In reality, the rats had bitten the baby to death.) We tried to comfort the child and went to the home (a shack with a dirt floor) to do what we could to comfort the parents and the other children. After we left the family we went to the owner of the farm and Sister Assumpta confronted him about the poor living conditions and the incident that had occurred. As a result of this confrontation, flooring was placed in all the shacks on his property.

Memories



Sister Therese Martinez

When and where have you worked with immigrant populations?

While teaching school in the 1970s, a group of Vietnamese boat people

enrolled in my district. There was one big problem! I did not speak Vietnamese. Before I knew it, one half of the class was staring at me and me at them! So I knew something had to be done in a hurry.

What did you enjoy about the experience?

The children were so receptive and tried their best to comply with all the school regulations.

What concerns arose as you ministered to immigrant communities?

The language became a terrible problem until I visited the school superintendent and obtained permission for the parents of the children to come to school with them. This worked, to a point, until the parents understood as well as their children. I was amazed how the parents and their children learned to communicate. So together we made it!

How did you see our SHF charism present in the situation?

Our SHF charism is so forceful! Our Sisters will go the extra mile to help anyone and I hope that this quality will always remain with Holy Family and will continue on and on!

Family of Friends

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SHF Vice President

Sister Judeana Davidson

SHF Congregational Councilors

Sister Marietta Fahey

Sister Mary Lange

Sister Carolyn Whited

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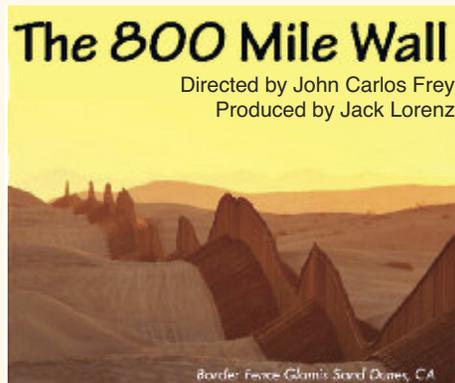
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Visit our website: holyfamilysisters.org

Insightful Documentary Film about the U.S. Mexican Border



The film highlights construction of the new border walls along the U.S. Mexican border as well as the effect on migrants trying to cross into the U.S. This powerful 90-minute film is an unflinching look at a failed U.S. border strategy that many believe violates fundamental human rights. Since border fences were built, over 5,000 migrant bodies have been recovered near our borders.

DVD available to borrow from SHF

Call Trish Carney at 510-624-4596 to make arrangements to borrow the DVD. Then invite friends for a showing.

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

1 Corinthians 13:

11. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. 12. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. 13. So faith, hope, love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love.