

Family of Friends

OCTOBER 2010

To seek out

and

advocate

for the poor

and needy,

especially

families,



for the

Kingdom

of God.

*Alaskan Ministry combines respect for
native traditions with Christian devotion.*



Sacred Heart of Christ, by Claudia McConnel

President's Message

October 2010



Greetings of the Fall Season and to this issue of Family of Friends.

We just celebrated the October 15th Feast of St. Teresa of Avila, a Doctor of the church and a woman who lived in tumultuous times. Her words of advice are a reflection worthy of our times:

*“Let nothing trouble you,
let nothing make you afraid.
All things pass away.
God never changes.
Patience obtains everything.
God alone is enough.”*

The Sisters of the Holy Family’s connection to the great saint is through one of our founding members, Ellen O’Connor, who became Sister M. Teresa of Jesus in 1878.

Sister Teresa had a missionary spirit and was responsible for much of the spiritual formation in the Congregation, faith growth in parishes, and the expansion of childcare in what we now call the Bay Area. Our Holy Family book notes in 1905 “...The two Day Homes and the Training School on Sixth Street were well filled with children, and the Sisters were assisting in twenty different Sunday Schools in San Francisco, besides going as far down the Peninsula as Colma and South City, San Bruno and Burlingame. The Community numbered about seventy members, and new calls were being made by the priests of the City for the services of the Sisters.”¹ All this occurred under the supervision of Sister Teresa.

In subsequent years the Sisters remarked in their Annals: “The Feast of St. Teresa was marked by a very great happiness. A few weeks ago the Sisters were called to attend a particularly pitiful case—a mother and her four little ones deserted by their father. Help was asked for them through the daily papers. The children were brought to the Convent and cared for until homes could be secured for them. In the meantime, the three oldest were instructed for Baptism, the mother being a Catholic. Today the four children were baptized, and the mother went to confession for the first time since her marriage.”²

These quotes give you a flavor for the “new Teresa” a woman of her time, a woman who sealed in the early Congregation a zeal for home missionary work. In past issues of “Family of Friends” we have focused on outreach in Nevada, Fresno and Hawaii; this issue will present our involvement in the Alaskan missions as told by Sister Angelina Dutra, Sister Marie Ann Brent, and Sister Victor Negrete. Sister Carol Crater, who currently ministers in our Care Center, also entered the Congregation from Alaska.

As always, we thank you for your generosity to the Congregation and its mission. We are grateful for your participation in our electronic auction which just concluded and for your participation in our fall raffle – yes, there is still time to purchase tickets for the November 15, 2010 drawing! We also invite you to consider gifts to the Sisters of the Holy Family through memorials and planned end-of-life gifts. As one woman said over 70 years ago: “Whenever Sister Teresa calls, my mother always sends for the check-book...”³

With joy and gratitude in the Holy Family,

Sr. Gladys Guenther

*Sr. M. Gladys Guenther
Congregational President*

1. *The Holy Family Sisters of San Francisco*, by Dennis John Kavanagh SJ, Gilmartin Co., San Francisco, Cal., 1922, page 248.

2. *Ibid* p.180.

3. *Ibid* p. 247.



We have a Faith Formation program for pre-school through high school, an adult catechesis program, an RCIA program led by our Deacon and his wife, a wonderful Pastoral Council who truly “calls forth the gifts of the people,” a Finance Council and an outreach program that serves both the needs of Valdez as well as Alaskan and world needs.

Last year our 4th through 8th grades had a cake auction on our local radio station. The parents made the most extraordinary cakes including one that looked like a bowl of spaghetti and meatballs! In one hour 15 cakes were auctioned off for a total of \$3,000. In between bids several children spoke on the radio explaining that the proceeds were going to Catholic Social Services in Anchorage, specifically for the Refugee Assistance Program. Our money purchased a “Moose-proof” fence (!) for the Community garden that the refugees work, taking their produce to the summer farmers’ market in downtown Anchorage. This allows these folks to make some money for their families as they work on learning the language and preparing for a life in the United States.



There is no such thing as an “average day” in my life. Some days may involve being in the office to see that all the reports required by the Archdiocese are completed. I may spend time visiting the patients at our hospital, bringing Communion to the homebound or spending time with a prisoner in our jail who has requested to speak with someone “of faith.” Every year I do a Blessing of the Animals on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi and a Blessing of the Motorcycles in May.

When all is said and done I see myself as a minister of service, helping people recognize their gifts and encouraging them to use those gifts to bring about the Body of Christ on earth ... at least this little spot of earth, Valdez, Alaska.

Sister Marie Ann Brent's Ministry in Alaska



In June of 1993 I came to Valdez, Alaska after serving six years as the Pastoral Administrator of Holy Rosary Parish in Dillingham, Alaska. Valdez is a small community of about 4,300 people situated at the northern edge of Prince William Sound. Although most people know of Valdez because of the oil tanker, the “Exxon Valdez” and the infamous oil spill that took place at Bligh Reef in the Sound, this little community came into being in the late 1800s as a stepping off place for those seeking gold in northern Alaska and British Columbia.

The Parish, St. Francis Xavier, which I was called to serve in 1993, was founded in 1903. As a Pastoral Administrator, or “Parish Director” as we are called now, I lead the Parish in the absence of a resident priest. St. Francis Xavier has been without a resident priest for almost 21 years. Unlike Dutch Harbor and Dillingham where I served before, the majority of residents in Valdez are not native to Alaska. The main employer in town is the Alyeska Pipeline Terminal where the oil from the North Slope, after traveling through 800 miles of pipe, comes to be loaded on tankers and taken to the “lower 48” States.

Our little Parish has about 95 families. My ministry among the people is to lead them to understand, to appreciate and to celebrate their Baptismal call to “be Church”—that is, to proclaim the Word, be Community, and to serve those in need. The people here have truly taken on leadership within the Church.

As Parish Director I am responsible to see that the people gather on the weekend to celebrate Liturgy. When a priest comes from Anchorage (that’s usually twice a month) Mass is celebrated at the vigil Mass on Saturday evening and again on Sunday morning. On the weekends that a priest is not scheduled, or is kept from flying in because of bad weather, either I, or our Deacon, or one of my Lay Presiders, lead the Community in a Liturgy of the Word with Communion. Whether a priest is here or not, we celebrate fully with Sacramental Ministers and music.

SHF Ministry in Alaska

Sister Victor Negrete's journey to Alaska began in 1969 with a phone call from Mother Maureen telling her that she had a week to pack to accompany Sister Marie Ann Brent to Alaska for a summer ministry in Juneau at the request of Bishop Francis T. Hurley (now retired Archbishop Emeritus of Anchorage).



Sisters Marie Ann and Victor were the first to live in the Sitka, Alaska Convent. Sister Angelina Dutra was transferred from Hawaii to Sitka in 1976 and Sister Victor was sent to Honokaa, Hawaii—new adventures for both Sister Angelina and Sister Victor. The three Sisters met again in Anchorage in 1998 when Sister Victor returned to Alaska.



During summer vacation classes Sisters Marie Ann and Victor met Claudia McConnel, an art teacher at Hoonah, Alaska. Ms. McConnel, having a great knowledge of the totemic art form, was asked to paint a picture of the Sacred Heart of Christ for Sacred Heart Church that was being built in Hoonah. When it was time for the dedication of the Chapel, Bishop Hurley invited the Elders of the Village to be the first to see this Crucifix which Claudia had painted on a six foot piece of ply board. Bishop Hurley stood at the back of the Chapel while the Elders took their places in the front of the Chapel. About 45 minutes went by without any movement from the Elders. When Bishop Hurley went up to them to find out their reaction to the painting they had tears of joy and were in prayer. The Hoonah crucifix combines the Tlingit Indian totemic art form and Christian devotion.



Above, Sisters Angelina, Marie Ann and Victor share with you the JOY each enjoyed most in Alaska... Sister Angelina's was, and still is, the SNOW; Sister Marie Ann enjoyed FISHING and Sister Victor enjoyed watching the IDITEROD RACES. Native DANCING tells the great native stories and the Sisters tried their best to learn it, which gave JOY to all three Sisters, as well as those who danced with them! The Sisters' stories and love of Alaska are twice as big as the State—but alas, no more space on the page!

(Read about Sister Marie Ann Brent's current ministry in Alaska on pages 6-7.)

Sister Carol Crater's Ministry in Our Care Center



I have been in Community Service as a Pastoral Care Assistant for the frail elderly members of the Sisters of the Holy Family for about four years. In addition to the Holy Family Sisters, we sometimes have close relatives of the Sisters or Dominican Sisters from Menlo Park staying in our Care Center in Fremont. Our residents may be confined to their beds by their illnesses, or they may be up and walking around but with special needs that require their staying in proximity to the caregivers. Whatever their needs or conditions might be, the pastoral care people are here to supplement their health and medical care with additional touches to make their lives better.

So, then, what is a day like in Pastoral Care? There is a certain routine of visiting, setting up for Mass or leading a Communion Service, reminding people that Mass is about to begin and gathering them together, sitting with people while they watch television in the evening, starting and stopping the movie on weekend afternoons, providing a special treat during the movie, giving medications to those who need assistance — but beyond the routine, every day has its own joys, challenges and surprises.

There may be a call in the middle of the night to sit with someone who is agitated, or a need to rush to the pharmacy for a prescription before the pharmacy closes, or a request to find someone in the house (no easy task!) who has not appeared for her dinnertime medications, or a fire alarm demanding that people be assisted to return to their rooms to shelter in place until the all clear.



I might be called to help someone talk about her feelings after having heard bad news from the doctor, or to help prepare a funeral liturgy for someone who is dying, or to prepare a photo display for the hallway in the Care Center, or to collect prizes and lead a lotto game for one of our monthly birthday parties, or even to write an article about our Pastoral Care ministry.

In Pastoral Care, I hardly ever have the day I had planned, and many days I spend the whole day feeling busy and then end the day feeling that I haven't finished anything — but the needs continue, so there is always tomorrow!

I look at the Sisters in their present frail condition, and I imagine or remember them at the height of their service to the church and to the world, and it is easy to show up every workday ready to respond to the needs of the day. It is said that "old age is not for sissies," and that is very clear in my work as I see what the frail elderly have to cope with. Some days I can help make things easier or more pleasant; other days I might just be a person to gripe to. Whichever I do, I see my ministry as part of the long perspective of Holy Family ministry.

In Memoriam

Sister M. Patrice Bradshaw was born in Oakland, California. She entered into rest on September 17, 2010 at the age of 88 at the Motherhouse in Fremont. Sister Patrice was a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family for 63 years. Her ministries as a Religious Educator and Pastoral Associate took her to parishes in the Dioceses of Fresno, Oakland and Sacramento and the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Sister was very involved in adult ministry and was instrumental in bringing about their return to Catholicism. After Sister's retirement to the Motherhouse she entered into a Ministry of Prayer. Though she suffered from increasing dementia, the love of her ministry with children was still present in her heart, and she would gather around her the children that only she could see, and would teach them and encourage them. Sister Patrice loved to sing and always led the Sisters in song in the Care Center. She knew the words to all the oldies and when she couldn't remember them any more she made up the words in her own language.



Sister M. Malachy Hannigan, born in Donegal, Ireland on December 4, 1906 and a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family for 76 years, died at the Motherhouse on March 16, 2010 at the age of 103. In her early years, Sister Malachy's ministry was in the Kitchen at the Sisters' Hayes Street Convent where she would feed lunch to anyone who appeared at the kitchen door. Sister Malachy was well known at Laguna Honda Home in her ministry to the elderly and was a regular volunteer at St. Anthony's Dining Room for several years until her retirement to the Motherhouse in 2002. In 1971, "Sister Malachy's Pastry Cookbook" was published, and in 2003 a second publication highlighted Sister's favorite recipes.



Sister Mary John Minetta, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family for 74 years, died August 31, 2010 at the age of 92, after a long illness. During her early years of ministry in San Francisco, Martinez, Burlingame, San Jose and Los Angeles, Sister John moved more and more toward



special religious education with developmentally disabled children. She was a pioneer in special religious education and in 1969 was named the first Executive Director of the National Apostolate for the Mentally Retarded. Sister John wrote several books and was a well-known presenter at lectures and teacher-training sessions for the developmentally disabled and other handicapped children. Sister Mary John was also a registered social worker.

Sister Guadalupe Partida, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family for 61 years, died on September 13, 2010 at the age of 81 at the Motherhouse in Fremont. Sister Guadalupe spent most of her years in parish ministry, from San Diego to Central California to Texas; often serving marginalized populations. Her parish ministry was always geared to seeking out the poor and the needy, and advocating for and with them. Empowering people is not without controversy, and Sister Guadalupe was fearless in speaking out for justice. In recent years Sister Guadalupe played an important role in the Long Beach Holy Family Guild, faithfully attending their meetings and praying and sharing with them. Sister Guadalupe was grounded in the earth. She loved her garden at the Motherhouse, and was instrumental in starting the vegetable garden that helps to feed the Sisters and provide produce for the homeless shelter. In 2007 Sister Guadalupe was asked to serve as a Councilor on the Leadership Team of Sisters of the Holy Family, a position she held until her death.



Sister Eileen Peach, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family for 68 years, died at the Motherhouse of the Sisters in Fremont on March 18, 2010 at the age of 88. For many years Sister Eileen served in the library of the Holy Family Day Home where she read and told stories to the children. Sister Eileen had a great love for children, music, and animals. She was full of life and photos from her ministry days frequently show Sister Eileen enjoying fun times with children, family and friends. Because of her ready smile that reached almost from ear to ear, Sister Eileen was affectionately called "Smiley Eiley." Even in her last years in the Care Center, Sister Eileen frequently shared her smile and laughter with those around her.



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