



# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

*offering hospitality to the world*



# *The* COMMITTEE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY by the  
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## *Your* THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

We want your input. Please send or email photos, stories and information about our sisters, associates, former members, family and friends, or any ideas which relate to the aim of this publication. You may submit the following to:

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## *Cover* PHOTOS

*The doorways represented on the cover are snapshots of significant moments in the Presentation history: (left to right) doorway of the current motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road; doorway of St. Vincent's Academy (now St. Columbkille) in Dubuque in 1879; doorway of Sacred Heart Chapel at the current motherhouse; doorway of the former motherhouse at 1229 Mount Loretta which was built in 1909; and doorway by which Mother Vincent Hennessy left Mooncoin, Ireland, to begin the Dubuque foundation in 1874.*

# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

## *A Look Inside* CONTENTS

Sisters of the Presentation | Fall 2011 | Volume 54 • Number 3

4

### Educators Continuing Nano's Work

*For centuries Nano Nagle's followers ministered across the world as educators, teaching children and adults about the faith, as well as instructing them in secular subjects. Today several Presentation sisters continue this ministry.*



10

### Serving Community Through Hobbies

*Retired sisters at Mount Loretto are busy people, whether it is doing various work at the motherhouse or volunteering in various ways in Dubuque. Highlighted are four sisters who are involved in the hobbies of art and crafts.*

14

### Widening & Deepening Our Circles

*Sisters from as far north as Minnesota, as far south as Bolivia, as far west as South Dakota, as far east as Washington DC, as well as points in between, converged upon Dubuque, Iowa, for their Presentation Community Days 2011 gathering.*

19

### Celebrating Associate Partnership

*Six newly committed associates joined 122 other men and women associates in sharing their belief in the mission of Nano Nagle and their desire to foster the Presentation spirit and charism while continuing within their own lifestyle.*



20

### Where in the World is...

*Sister Mary Clarice Kane is a wonderful story teller especially delighting in sharing stories of when she was young, of her teaching career and of her travels.*

22

### Celebrating 25 Years of Religious Life

*Presentation Sisters Joetta Venneman, Mary Lou Specha and Julie Marie Marsh celebrated 25 years of religious life on September 3 with family, friends and Presentation sisters and associates.*



25

### Mount Loretto & Beyond

*We share with you special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation sisters, near and far.*

## *Cover* PHOTO

*During Community Days 2011, Sister Mery Cari Paz was gifted with a lantern and the blessing of the gathered community as a sign of their prayerful support for her as she continued her preparation for final vows. Read about her commitment ceremony on page 23.*



# A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

by MARGE HEALY, PBVM

An overnight stay in an O'Hare Airport makeshift dormitory ended with a 4:30 a.m. announcement to fold up cots. Sleepy travelers headed to the gates where a couple kept many of us entertained as they interacted with their young daughters who were oblivious to the "inconveniences" happening around them. Suddenly the five year-old froze in position as her eyes locked onto the eyes of another girl who was wearing an identical bright, tutu-like dress and white tights. Their eyes met in delight and an obvious desire to get to know each other. These were two little girls who loved fancy dresses and traveled across oceans to spend time with grandparents. The family living in England was traveling to visit grandparents in Iowa while the other girl's family was returning to Ohio from visiting grandparents in India.

A more recent stopover at O'Hare was also accompanied by thunderstorms and delays. Carefully stepping around a body stretched out on the floor, I found a seat. Drawn into a conversation taking place behind me I realized that the prone body, covered by a sheet with a straw hat strategically placed over the face, had risen. She was a college student I knew from the Dubuque area. Returning from an internship in Washington DC, following a previous summer's internship in India, she was eager to spend time with her family, including her grandmother.

The majority of children, pre-school or college-aged, love spending time with their grandparents. Some are comfortable crossing borders because they are going to be with those with whom they feel secure and loved. Yet, sometimes harsh poverty necessitates travel and separates families.

Ever present in my heart is an immigrant woman who came to the United States to work, leaving her child with her parents. Upon becoming pregnant with her second child, her father in Mexico sent word that he would come to the states. He reasoned that with his added salary all could return to Mexico more quickly. Knowing that crossing the border had become more dangerous both his daughter and her husband attempted to dissuade him. Nevertheless, he began his journey north. His daughter in the states and his family in Mexico awaited word of his arrival. None ever came, only rumors that "some" had died.

As immigrants, Presentation sisters came to North American shores in the 1800s. Many taught the children of immigrants. Today, ministry among immigrants continues. In 2006 North American Presentations released a statement supporting comprehensive immigration reform.

We pride ourselves on being a nation of immigrants, while currently hospitality to these newcomers is being challenged. News reports chronicle increased attempts of state and national legislators to pass bills making life more difficult for immigrants. Fear is experienced by both newcomers and receivers as myths are mistaken for truth. May all of us, like wise grandparents, create a world with friendly borders and support individuals and families in all of their journeys.

Presentation sisters and associates of North America stand in support of immigrants, migrants and refugees in a spirit of hospitality and compassion. In solidarity with women religious and Catholic Bishops throughout North America, we "promote legislation that includes family reunification; a path to earned legalization; worker protections and an effective border policy that is humane rather than punitive." August 16, 2006



For action steps regarding the DREAM Sabbath and other immigration legislation go to [www.dubuquepresentations.org](http://www.dubuquepresentations.org)



## Our PURPOSE

The purpose of Presentation Doorways is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our associates by sharing the news and views of the congregation with our benefactors, families and friends. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

## Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are Catholic women who dedicate our lives to God through evangelization, prayer, service and hospitality. Our way of life is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We share in the vision of our foundress, Nano Nagle, who dared to dream of a better world for the poor, sick and uneducated of Ireland. We commit ourselves to the empowerment of women and children. We reverence and celebrate all creation as gift. We commit ourselves to confronting injustice and working for peace.

As we continue to keep Nano's dream alive, we are pleased to share our mission with you.

### Sisters of the Presentation LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sister Jennifer Rausch, president

Sister Marge Healy, vice-president

Sister Beth Driscoll, councilor

Sister Leanne Welch, councilor



Sister Donna Demmer enjoys challenging her students to do their best.

# Educators Continuing Nano's Work

by FRANCINE QUILLIN, PBVM

Nano Nagle, daughter of wealth, was moved to serve those less fortunate. She determined that the Irish Catholics, prevented by Penal Law from being educated, could grow to be productive citizens only if they were educated. Thus she began her “hedge schools,” secret gatherings behind the high bushes of Ireland. If the authorities came by, the girls pulled out embroidery. Nano was nothing if not creative.

For centuries her followers ministered across the world as educators, teaching children and adults about the faith, as well as instructing them in secular subjects. Today several Presentation sisters have embraced other forms of ministry, as indeed did Nano, who went at night by lantern flame to visit the sick, the lonely.

Yet today, there are excellent teachers who continue this form of Nano’s heritage, and she would be proud of them. Look at these three veterans, for instance.

## Sister Donna Demmer

Sister Donna Demmer will mark 40 years of teaching at the end of 2012. She has taught fifth and sixth grades, and sometimes math to grades four through eight, in such far flung places as Humboldt and Storm Lake, Iowa; St. Germaine in Oak Lawn, Illinois, and currently at Resurrection School in Dubuque.

“When I was very young, my father became ill, and Father Dalton brought Communion to him each morning, then drove us children to school,” recalls Sister Donna. In those moments Sister Donna became influenced by service to the church, and thus was planted the seed of a religious vocation.

For Sister Donna, the satisfaction in this ministry is seeing children’s respect for one another and their great willingness to be of service to people. “As a math major, I believe in incorporating faith into that subject by teaching such things as honesty, fairness in competition and the principles of social justice,” says Sister.

One example of the latter is that she has students figure out how a person earning minimum wage could pay for food, rent, needs of children, etc.

Sister Donna is impressed with technology and what it can do in this age, but she also hopes that young people do not forget how to actually socialize in the midst of texting and other modern means of communication.

Sister is energized in her ministry by the collaboration of the teachers in the school, and especially in her unit. “Not only do we work together, we sometimes socialize, and just generally enjoy one another’s company. Coming to school each day is not a chore!” remarks Sister Donna.

## Sister Marjorie Loughren

Sister Marjorie Loughren is currently beginning her 41<sup>st</sup> year of teaching. Also a math major, she has taught grades two through five variously, in Bankston, Key West, Osage and Epworth, all in Iowa, and in Oak Lawn, Illinois. She has been in her current school, St. Paschal Baylon in Minneapolis for 24 years.

“I love the family atmosphere of the school,” says Sister Marjorie. “Many of the teachers there are long-term, and now they are teaching some children of their former students.” Today the school has become very multi-cultural. Sister Marjorie notes that, despite language differences, sometimes the children can communicate better with each other than adults can with the children. She was very touched when some students, concerned about a child from Burma who had no snow pants, brought clothes from home for her.

“The fact that the children initiated this among themselves is a testament to how they are absorbing the basic principles of faith in action,” states Sister.

Sister insists that youth are not selfish, as they are too often characterized; rather they simply need to be taught to be Christian.

I love to see the sparkle in their eyes when they can read, and when they learn to believe in themselves.

Sister Joan Brincks

Sister Marjorie enjoys teaming with teachers and working with her students. She has often been on the “cutting edge” of new ideas in teaching over the years, and she brings to her classroom her organizational skills, her education and her teaching abilities.

## Sister Joan Brincks

Sister Joan (Irene) Brincks, has been teaching 28 years in first and second grades in Whittemore, Epworth, and Humboldt, all in Iowa, and is now in her 17<sup>th</sup> of those years in Mason City, Iowa. It is not hard to know why Sister Joan could remain with young children all those years: she loves children!

“I love to see the sparkle in their eyes when they can read, and when they learn to believe in themselves,” states Sister Joan.

Today, she says, there is a wider range of abilities among students, so keeping standards high is very challenging, but she tries to meet each child where s/he is, and to help each one grow. Sister’s philosophy is to teach the whole person, addressing the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of each student.

Sister Joan has worked hard to keep herself on top of the changes in her profession. Each summer she has taken a class, such as one on comprehension for struggling students, to help her learn and keep growing. Technology excites her, and she sees the world of primary students growing bigger because of it. She has been able to establish pen pals by email for her students with children in



Twenty-four years at St. Paschal School hasn't dampened Sister Marjorie's enthusiasm for learning as she both displays a smile herself and elicits one from her student.





Sister Joan Brincks enjoys creative learning time with her first graders.

Australia. When she talks about world situations in religion class, she uses technology. For instance, they connected through computers with some schools hit by the tsunami in Japan, and they also prayed for them. “Bringing the world to the classroom energizes me,” states Sister Joan.

In her “spare” time, Sister Joan is part of a Presentation associate group, and she volunteers with the Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church. She also appreciates the fact that the faculty of the Newman School System is a family, offering great support to one another, and she notes that they appreciate having a woman religious teaching, especially in primary grades.

“I derive joy from being able to share her prayer life with them, teaching both students and faculty different forms of prayer through music and movement. I especially like to model moments of silence during the day to become more aware of God’s presence within oneself, within others and within nature,” states Sister Joan. Loving nature, she teaches her children to see that everything is God’s gift, and we need to treasure and take care of the earth.

Nano’s dream of educating, both in the faith and in secular subjects, is alive and well.

part of unincorporated Polk County. Her other options included churches in Chicago and Queens, New York. “When I discerned and prayed about it, I felt I wanted to work in Florida,” she said.

Sister Paula’s teaching experience in Chicago led her to learn Spanish. It became a necessity because in many parent-teacher conferences, the children would have to translate the conversations. That also led to one of her first ministries, translating at Centro Guadalupano, where she has been since 1989. Centro Guadalupano, formed in 1985, serves the Hispanic community. Many of the mission’s regular church-goers, immigrants and farmworkers from Mexico, speak only Spanish. All of the mission’s Masses are in Spanish.

“When I first came here, I had to feel my way around. I didn’t have any ministry,” Sister Paula said. “I have been to the birth of 12 babies because in my first couple of years here, there were no translators at the public health office or in the hospitals.”

She no longer translates full time, and her duties at the Centro Guadalupano Mission have grown numerous, into what she describes as “a hodgepodge.” The list includes secretarial work and bookkeeping, among other responsibilities.

Sister Paula remains an educator. She leads multiple Bible studies in surrounding communities and teaches religious education,

**As we looked at the charism of our foundress and the need, we felt more that the need was to help those who were poor. There are still sisters in education, but a lot of us are in other ministries.** *Sister Paula Schwendinger*

which has grown from 20 people in 1989 to more than 250 today. She also leads a prayer service each week dedicated to immigration concerns. She shares her day-to-day responsibilities with Father Norman Farland, the only other full-time staff member at Centro Guadalupano.

Sister Paula said her most memorable experiences at Centro Guadalupano Mission are watching the people grow and flourish. Some of her former students are now catechists, and many parishioners who have struggled now have stable jobs and have been able to buy a house. Last year, 19 high school graduates who attend Centro Guadalupano went on to college.

“It’s been just great to have been a part of their lives,” Sister said.

*This article was originally published in the September 16, 2011 issue of the Florida Catholic newspaper, Orlando edition.*

# Sister Paula Schwendinger Missionary at Heart

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**Sister Paula Schwendinger joined the Sisters of the Presentation when she was 18.**

“I was taught by the Presentation community in grade school and high school,” Sister Paula said. “I was impressed by their joyfulness and by the sisters’ giving of themselves. That’s what drew me.”

The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary were established in Ireland in 1775 by Nano Nagle, who felt called to educate children. Sister Paula earned a degree in elementary education and taught for 15 years prior to moving to the Diocese of Orlando, Florida.

The Presentation sisters also stress the importance of another ministry: working with the impoverished. “As we looked at the charism of our foundress and the need, we felt more that the need was to help those who were poor,” Sister Paula said. “There are still sisters in education, but a lot of us are in other ministries.”

One of Sister’s interests was to be a missionary; her congregation had a mission in Bolivia. “But there were no available spots when I applied,” she said.

So, she began interviewing for positions with communities in the United States. She interviewed at and was given the option to move to the Centro Guadalupano Mission in Wahneta, Florida,



Sister Paula Schwendinger of Centro Guadalupano Mission in Wahneta, Florida, assists parishioners during a food drive in August at the parish center. She has been ministering to members of the mission and surrounding community since 1989.





Angey Lochner enjoys visiting with Sister Dolores Zieser while styling her hair.

## Not just a Profession A Caring Cosmetologist

by JOAN LICKTEIG, PBVM

What was that? Was it a cool breeze? A flash of color? A friendly echo? No, it's Angey Lochner, the nearly indescribable Mount Loretto cosmetologist who just arrived, with gusto, to serve her anticipating clients.

Explain Angey? "How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?" Describe Angey? "How do you hold a moonbeam in your hand?"

Bubbly, outgoing, enthusiastic, friendly and lovable; that's Angey, though she might describe herself as "a crazy cosmetologist." Whatever the adjectives, she offers a breath of fresh air as she walks down the hall, searches the dining room, or calls one of the floors – seeking her next client who may have forgotten her appointment or is running a little late.

Daughter of Bonnie and Al Heiberger, she was baptized Angela, but now prefers "Angey," using her own unique spelling. Angey, a friendly extrovert and faith-filled beautician, welcomes each sister with a personal greeting as she arrives at the door of the first-floor salon. Many sisters visit Angey every week for a shampoo and set. Sisters from Nagle Center Three and Four, who are no longer able to style their own hair, leave the swivel chair on their appointed day, looking fresh and lovely for the week. Services are available for everyone in the house. Haircut and perm appointments follow a rotating schedule, according to each one's needs.

Angey has been employed at Mount Loretto for 11 years. While working at another salon, she helped out a friend by picking up some extra appointments at the convent. In her own words: She "fell in love with the sisters and couldn't leave." Eventually, she discontinued her previous job and became the regular beautician at Mount Loretto. She works two full days and one half day each week. Look for her on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Friday mornings. Even if you don't see her, you might hear her lively voice, echoing down the hall, a little south of the front entrance.

Cosmetology proved to be a preferred profession for Angey because of the opportunities it offered her to use her creativity while, at the same time, to make people feel good about themselves. She enjoys the one-on-one contact, as she gets to know each sister personally, joining, as she says, "the one, big, happy Presentation family." Angey's work is more than a profession; it's a ministry: of love, kindness, patience – and magnanimity of heart.

St. Catherine in rural Dubuque is the home of Angey, her daughter Katelynn, and her husband, Ashley. Angey attended Holy Ghost Grade School and Senior High School. She received her cosmetology license following her program at Capri in Dubuque, which she attended after high school. Her husband, Ashley, was taught by Presentation sisters in Key West, before he enrolled at Senior High School.

Angey lays claim to a large clientele. In addition to the 50 sisters who depend on her skills each week, there are the 325 children who in turn lay claim to her energy at West Side Gymnastics, where she coaches Monday through Thursday afternoons, from 4:00 p.m. to late evening.

Not only does Angey enjoy gymnastics and cosmetology, she likes camping with her family, motorcycle riding with her husband and scrapbooking with her daughter, Katelynn, a senior this year. Another highlight of her life are their two outdoor chow-labs, Red Rock and Toby.

While running late is a pet peeve for Angey, this happy, energetic stylist accommodates her clients and often adjusts her schedule – with an added dash of good humor. While multi-tasking amidst the hum of the hair dryer, and the whoosh of the blow dryer, the talking and cutting, the curling and teasing, the splashing and spraying, Angey manages an enthusiastic greeting for the folks walking past the door of this busy salon. Energy exudes and sunshine prevails at the busy intersection between the elevator and the dining room. And there, in the midst of it all – Angey!



## DUBUQUE'S got SisterS

Discernment Weekend  
November 11-13, 2011

You are invited to quiet, to prayer and to learn how you might experience God's truth within you. Join us for a day, or two, of input and reflection.

### Weekend options:

Friday, November 11 at 5 pm  
to Saturday, November 12 at 6 pm

**OR**

Friday, November 11 at 5 pm  
to Sunday, November 13 at 12 pm

**Location:** Mount Carmel,  
1150 Carmel Drive. Dubuque, IA



### To register or for information:

Lou Anglin, BVM  
langlin@bvmcong.org  
563.588.2351

Register by  
Friday, November 4

Sponsored by Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque Franciscan Sisters, and Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters.





*Sister Marie Barth teaches her weekly art class members a new painting technique.*



# Retired Sisters Serving Community Through Hobbies

by DOLORES ZIESER, PBVM

Retired sisters at Mount Loretto are busy people, whether it is doing various work at the motherhouse, volunteering in various ways in Dubuque, doing needlework or taking part in prayer ministry. The four sisters highlighted here are involved in the hobbies of art and crafts which for them is one way of serving the community, specifically by contributing to the community gift shop and annual fall boutique.

**Sister Marie Barth** once stated, “I’ll never retire from art, music or spirituality.” Sister Marie is living up to this promise during retirement in all these ways, especially in her art where she excels in watercolor painting. She has framed originals and prints and also greeting cards done in this medium. These are for sale in the motherhouse gift shop and at the Mount Loretto Arts & Crafts Boutique held each fall. Sister shares her artistic talent with other retired sisters at Mount Loretto during a weekly art class when she teaches them watercolor techniques so they can enjoy their own paintings and greeting cards. She considers art to be a ministry and encourages members of her art class to see their creations as ministry. They can make greeting cards for family and friends, and recently they began making these cards for the sisters who serve in hospital, hospice care and prison ministries. The sisters are glad to have cards to give when they make their rounds of visiting. Each year Sister Marie goes

**I’ll never retire from art, music or spirituality.**

*Sister Marie Barth*

to Okolona, Mississippi, for a week to teach art to groups of students and adults in the Excel Program coordinated by Sister Jean Ann Meyer. Sister also donates some of her paintings and cards to benefit events in various local groups. Yes, for Sister Marie, art is a ministry!

**Sister Kay Cota's** motto could be, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” She became very interested in photography in 2008 when she accompanied a St. Joseph Sister friend, a native Hawaiian, to Hawaii to celebrate their common anniversary of 50 years of religious life. In sharing about that trip she explained, “I bought my first ‘real’ camera for that two-week experience. I took hundreds of pictures in those exotic islands, and thus began my new hobby.”

Photography for Sister Kay is “seeing the significant in the insignificant; viewing the extraordinary in our ordinary day-to-day living.” She does this through photos of God’s beauty in flowers, landscapes, trees, people, animals, birds and buildings or a rainbow. She says, “God speaks to me in all of nature. I am overcome by a sense of awe, hope, joy, peace, tranquility and trust when I experience God’s gifts to me.”

Sister Kay shares her photos with the sisters by displaying them around Mount Loretto and on the closed circuit television. She offers her photo cards and framed pictures in the gift shop and at the annual Arts & Crafts Boutique.



*Sister Kay Cota proudly displays her newest nature photos for the sisters at Mount Loretto.*



*Sister James Marie Gross finds relaxation in creating shopping tote bags available for purchase in the community gift shop or annual craft sale.*



**Sister James Marie Gross** learned sewing, quilting, crocheting and embroidery from her mother. More than that, her mother taught her the value of using what others throw away – scraps of material and parts of worn out clothing that are still good. Sister states, “I learned the joy of creating something out of these materials in a unique way, sometimes practical, as well as attractive.” Some examples of these are the tote bags she makes from upholstery material, drapery scraps and recycled corrugated cardboard. She also makes shopping bags from worn out denim jeans which she decorates with colorful fabric scraps. These are sold in the community gift shop and at the annual Arts & Crafts Boutique along with her knit caps and dishcloths, quilted trivets, sewn aprons and scrub tops which are purchased in great quantities by nurses, kitchen workers and housekeepers. Her handiwork is a popular item for eager buyers.

**God speaks to me in all of nature. I am overcome by a sense of awe, hope, joy, peace, tranquility and trust when I experience God’s gifts to me.** *Sister Kay Cota*



*Sister Dolores Zieser* has had a love of art and crafts from her early childhood, a gift encouraged by her mother who, though she kept busy with a family of 14 children, still found time for doing crafts, crocheting, knitting and sewing for her children. Sister Dolores had no formal training in art until she attended college, after which she used her talents for teaching art in grade schools and high schools. Her current interest is handwoven baskets, a craft she first learned at a basket weaving retreat in Racine, Wisconsin, in 2003. There she learned that basket weaving is a contemplative activity; this means a prayerful weaving of God's materials from nature and reflecting on all the people of the past who created beauty in basketry. Wanting to continue learning the techniques of this craft she attended basketweaving classes in Hopkins, Minnesota, while working there in pastoral ministry until her retirement in 2008. Now she appreciates the time she has to work with this craft as a hobby. Recently she heard about a basket weaving shop a short distance from Dubuque where she takes classes to learn new techniques to add to her repertoire. Since 2002 Sister has handcrafted almost 200 baskets of various sizes, shapes and colors. She says, "My goal is to weave about two dozen baskets each year to have on sale at our annual fall Arts & Crafts Boutique and in our gift shop."



*Sister Dolores Zieser uses basketweaving as a hobby and as means of reflection and prayer.*

## Sisters Prepare Ditty Bags

by JOAN LICKTEIG, PBVM

Initiated by Sisters Sheila Ann Dougherty and Annette Skyles, the Mount Loretto sisters prepared 60 ditty bags for the homeless in Chicago. Efficient and competent seamstresses, Sisters Mary Louise Scieszinski and Sheila Ann cut and sewed the ditty bags.

Ditty bags are described in *Sea Terms* by John Rogers: an ancient nautical term, it refers to a simple, functional bag containing personal items and tools of the trade. Seamen, skilled at making and repairing sails, sewed the bags and filled them, according to their needs. The practice continues today sans sailors.

Lorraine and Mildred Schmitt, 82 year-old-twins in Caledonia, Minnesota, recalled helping their mother and other women put together ditty bags for the poor, more than 60 years ago. The bags would be transferred at the area meeting to the State and National Conference of Catholic Women to be distributed to the needy.

Today Caledonia, Minnesotans Lolita and Glenn St. Mary carry on the tradition in their family, involving three and four generations. Foregoing the usual Christmas gift exchange, family members, young and old alike, collect standard-size shampoo, shaving lotion, razors, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap, washcloths and towels, combs and brushes, and take them to Grandma and Grandpa's house at Christmas and other times of family visits during the year.

Lolita sews colorful ditty bags throughout the year and receives the on-going gathering of supplies. Subsequently, Lolita and Glenn transport them to St. Mary's Catholic Church in Caledonia, where Sister Michaeline Healy gathers them to take to Dubuque for Sister Barbara Rastatter, who serves the homeless in an outreach program at St. James Parish in Chicago. Care, concern and love for the poor, gathered into ditty bags, travel "from a sea concept" to Caledonia, Minnesota to Dubuque, Iowa to Chicago, Illinois, where those made homeless by the demolition of the Chicago Housing Projects graciously receive much-needed and appreciated supplies.

Inspired by the people of Caledonia, the Mount Loretto sisters, Presentation associates, other sisters and friends pooled their resources to purchase recommended supplies. Interest and participation exceeded expectations. Sisters Benjamin Duschner and René Laubenthal joined the shopping/sorting team. As the items poured in, Sisters Annette and Sheila Ann directed the final organizing, and retired sisters came forward to fill the bags.

In mid-August Sister Sheila Ann visited Sister Barbara – and delivered the 60 ditty bags. A homeless gentleman, upon receipt of his personal gift, asked Sister Barbara where she got all those bags. She explained that they came from "my sisters in Dubuque" who made them for the guests. With wide-open eyes he commented, "Wow! You must have a lot of sisters!" She does.

Ditty bags: ancient nautical term referred to a simple, functional bag containing personal items and tools of the trade.



*Left to right: top photo: Sisters Annette Skyles, Louise Scieszinski and Therese Marie Hawes fill ditty bags for the homeless. Bottom photo: Sister Barbara Rastatter can attest to the gratitude of ditty bag recipients at St. James Parish in Chicago.*

## ARTS & CRAFTS BOUTIQUE & BAKE SALE

*A benefit to support people in need*

**Saturday, October 22 • 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Sisters of the Presentation  
2360 Carter Road  
Dubuque, IA  
Located in the gym behind motherhouse**

Proceeds this year will go to Opening Doors - Maria House and Teresa Shelter, Dubuque and HAITI (Michael Geilenfeld) - Rebuilding of St. Joseph Home and Wings of Hope (handicapped children) which were destroyed in the earthquake. Proceeds from the last two annual sales went to the following ministries in which our sisters serve people who are homeless and in need:

2010 - \$817.55 each to Hope House in Dubuque and Café Reconcile in New Orleans  
2009 - \$635.70 each to Dubuque Food Pantry, St. James Food Pantry in Chicago and Lantern Light in New Orleans.







Left to right: Above photo: Sisters Marjorie Loughren, Francesca Presseller, Suzanne Takes and Annette Kestel were participants in a sacred circle group. Left photo: The total community gathered in a large circle for sharing in the Presentation Center.

# Widening & Deepening Our Circles Community Days 2011

by GINA FOLETTA, PBVM

Sisters from as far north as Minnesota, as far south as Boliva, as far west as South Dakota, as far east as Washington DC, as well as points in between, converged upon Dubuque, Iowa, for their Presentation Community Days 2011 gathering.

Lynn Levo, CSJ, PhD, set the stage as she addressed living authentically while journeying into the future. She challenged sisters to consider who they are choosing to be at this time in their history. Who do they hope to become in the future? They realized, at a deeper level now, that hope happens in connection with each other, not in isolation.

Melissa Bailey-Kirk, M.Div. called the group to continue the journey by engaging them in a discussion model called “The Circle Process.” In this process the sisters focused on how the Spirit seemed to be nudging them toward a deeper understanding of their mission as Presentation sisters. Further, they sensed the transformative power of their “deep listening” to one another.

In the day’s concluding session, thoughts, ideas and concerns were harvested and displayed on the walls of the room, where they could be viewed by all participants and later summarized and processed by the Community Days’ planning committee for subsequent consideration in their ongoing small groups and Chapter of Affairs. The sharing of memories and questions helped the community to name “what is” and to ponder the future.

The sisters continued with the Circle Process on Saturday morning and ended with a commissioning ritual that included a blessing in anticipation of Mery Cari Paz’s final profession commitment.

Reflecting deeply about their days together, Sister Corine Murray aptly summarizes in the following poem.



Touched by the Spirit of God  
within and among us  
memories  
stories  
and  
unsettling questions  
found voice in circle conversation  
to name the unsolved of what is  
and  
to ponder anew  
our shared future.

Sister Corine Murray

Every issue will tell you a little bit about the life of Nano Nagle, the woman behind the lantern, and the women who follow in her footsteps.

The Lady of the Lantern

NANO  
Lives



by JOAN LICKTEIG, PBVM

## Mother Mary Columba (Bridget) O'Callaghan, Superior 1913-1916

Bridget, the fourth daughter of William and Mary (Hennessy) O'Callaghan identified her vocation to become a foreign missionary in her early teens. While discerning, Bridget visited her sister in New York, and met Father Fogarty, who told of the missionary work of the Presentation sisters in his Dubuque parish, St. Columbkille. A short time later, 19-year-old Bridget left her Irish homeland and her loving family, traveled to Dubuque – and stayed, never to return to her home country.

Sister Columba, a competent teacher with artistic training and a flexible and willing heart, filled any number of unexpected vacancies upon short notice. After she had responded to many such requests, one witty sister fondly named her “the traveling ambassador.”

When in charge of the novices, it is told, she frequently put her large sleeves over her mouth to conceal a smile at the faults/concerns they reported and then responded in her usual gracious matter. Sisters interviewed many years later recalled, with fondness and affection, their novitiate days under Mother Columba’s guidance.

Teaching, taking charge on local missions, three times elected mistress of novices and once as mother assistant, Mother Columba was no stranger to leadership and its responsibilities when she was elected the seventh Presentation mother superior. While willing to accept whatever God asked of her in community, she perceived the role of community superior as onerous, contrary to her genteel nature and meek manner. Her preference was to reflect the light, rather than be “center stage.” Nonetheless, she fulfilled her responsibilities with resignation.

Previous to 1914, the sisters had left their convents only to go to and from their missions. Education of the sisters had always been provided at the motherhouse. But when an extension of the Catholic University came to Columbia College (now Loras College) in 1914, Mother Columba thought the sisters should avail themselves of the opportunity to attend classes there. Contrary to the prevailing enclosure, this difficult and defining decision was met with resistance from the community. Listening to the advice of the archbishop and her council, Mother Columba authorized sisters, for the first time, to leave the convent for educational purposes, an innovative decision that built upon previous education efforts and continued the strong educational emphasis that characterized the community.

While there was more than one difficult decision that Mother Columba had to make, she maintained her characteristic personality and was described in Sister Mary Rosalia Plamondon’s *Annals* as “kind, simple, pleasant...and gentle as a dove.” Looking back on Mother Columba’s service as congregational leader, the examples make it apparent that she sought reasonable solutions and responded to the current needs.



# A Culture of Discernment

## Following Nano's Light

by ANN JACKSON, PBVM



In the Quaker tradition, the Clearness Committee provides a structure to facilitate two key convictions:

- Our guidance comes primarily from within us.
- We need community to help us clarify and amplify the voice within each of us – the voice of God.

### Essential Qualities of a Good Listener

Douglas V. Steere, a leading Quaker of the twentieth century, has long been a mentor and teacher in the spiritual life. A Harvard Ph.D. and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, Steere spent much of his life questing to know God. In his 1955 classic *On Listening to Another*, he lists four qualities of a good listener. The first is vulnerability, a certain humble openness to listen our way into being.

A second quality, acceptance, reflects agape-love as understood in the New Testament. This kind of love does not strive to shape or mold the other person. Rather, it accepts the other as that person is.

Hopefulness, the third quality of a good listener, is two-pronged – encompassing both optimism and a sense of mission. Teilhard de Chardin possessed such optimism grounded in a conviction that God, Divine Love, is at the very heart of things – all things. We embrace all of life by finding God in it. We learn from Martin Buber, a remarkable Jewish philosopher who, having attended a Quaker meeting, commented that the greatest thing one person could do for another is to confirm what is deepest in the other – a sense of mission. That truth constantly surfaces in the Quaker process of discernment wherein we desire to confirm what is deepest in other persons, calling forth the hope that exists in them.

The fourth listening quality, presence, means “to stand with” or “stay with” another. To really listen to another requires radical patience. Just as listening is more than hearing words and distinguishing sounds, and seeing is more than looking at objects, presence means to feel where words come from. The point is to go beyond “words” and “thoughts.” In discernment we desire to reach the deepest origin of them within.

Perhaps more than at any other point in history our society suffers deep division. Certainly the political sphere reflects this as gridlock paralyzes our government preventing civil discourse and conciliation in the public interest and for the common good. Our culture affects us. Rather than spiraling into despair, we need only look to our Presentation foundress, Nano Nagle, for direction. Nano’s deep listening and spiritual discernment informed her decisions and ultimately her mission to serve those made poor. Her contemplative stance and open heart proved essential.

Like Nano, our potential for being a prophetic and healing presence demands we, too, engage individually and communally in discernment.

### Why Discern?

Prayerful discernment is a practice of deep listening, “of getting clear” and only then deciding. It assists in distinguishing between what is true and what is false, between what is primary and what is secondary, between what is central and what is peripheral...

### A Discernment Process in the Quaker Tradition

The Quaker Clearness Committee consists of a Focus Person, Deep Listeners and a Scribe. The focus person hosts the circle asking those gathered to assist in listening to the Spirit within. Listeners really listen and surface questions. The Scribe records the questions lifted for the focus person’s further prayer.

The purpose of a Clearness Committee:

- To achieve clarity through deep speaking and deep listening;
- To listen one another into being and truth;
- To create and hold a sacred space within which a person can speak one’s truth and hear one’s own inner voice (the voice of God).

Parker Palmer, in *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* notes that during the first step toward “clearness,” the focus person frames the presentation of the issue in three parts:

- Identify the issue, as best one can.
- Offer background information that bears directly on the issue.
- Name clues one may have about a current lean within the situation.

Together, listeners create a sacred space supporting the discerner. They rest in silence and listen receptively. They ask open, honest questions aimed at helping the person rather than satisfying curiosity. They offer the healing and empowering gifts of silence and laughter. At circle’s end, the scribe presents the focus person with a gift of reflection for his/her further discernment.

### Benefits of the Quaker Process of Discernment

Holding people sacredly takes time, energy and patience. Below are a few of the tensions we learn to hold in a circle of trust (paraphrased from Parker Palmer):

- When we listen, we do not fix or save; we hold the tension and offer the person space to hear his/her inner teacher. We neither invade nor evade one another’s reality but rather find ‘a third way of being present’ to one another.
- We create a form of community in the silence of this ‘third way’ as it allows and invites each person within the circle to truly listen without having to formulate his/her next idea. Such presence invites the prayerful spirit that true discernment requires.

- Discussion never involves efforts to persuade or dissuade one another. Instead, each person speaks from his/her center to the center of the circle, where all explore the wisdom of the collective spirit, and the spirit of God.

- In a circle, truth resides neither in external authority nor in the momentary convictions of each individual. Rather, it resides between people, in the tension of the eternal conversation, where the voice of truth one thinks one is hearing from within can be checked and balanced by the voices of truth others voice hearing.

The success of a true Quaker process of discernment does not depend on whether the focus person “resolves” the issue. Rather, it is measured simply by whether listeners have held the person safely, sacredly, and openly. When we are able to do this wonderful insights surface. Listeners need simply to continue to hold that person in the light, trusting the wisdom of his/her inner teacher.

When we are unrelated to those whose lives are different from ours, suffering persists. Such suffering will decrease as we collectively choose to be together in a way that creates a space for something new to occur. Nano witnessed that suffering occur as a result of disconnectedness or an imbalance of power and resources. In her day as in now, this continues to be a dominant issue in today’s culture. Like Nano, we, too, have a choice – a choice to build the social fabric and transform the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole.



Left to right: Clockwise: Sisters Marge Healy, Linda Reicks, Marilyn Breen, Cheryl Demmer, Richelle Friedman and Joetta Venneman listen as one member speaks to the sacred center.



# Meeting, Working & Praying Together

## Presentation Partners

by SISTER SHEILA KANE and KARLA BERNs, ASSOCIATE CO-DIRECTOR

After thoughtful consideration, this associate group has decided to change its name from Handmaids to Presentation Partners. The more they meet, work and pray together, the more they depend on one another. They truly are partners.

They have covered a variety of topics at their meetings. Some of the compelling subjects studied and discussed were carbon footprints audit, Monika Hellig's *Guests of God, The Earth Charter*, an article on Violence Against Women and more. They watched DVDs about Advent, Lent, recycling and climate change.

**We are called to evangelize, offering hope and love to a broken world by incarnating the hospitality of God, confronting injustice and working for peace.**

*Sisters of the Presentation Mission Statement*

Socializing has also been a key component of their meetings. They have always taken time to enjoy refreshments, meals and one another. On several occasions they had potlucks in connection with their meetings. The Presentation Partners, like Nano Nagle, have hospitality as one of their primary focuses in all that they do.

A report about Presentation Partners would not be complete without mentioning Sister Elizabeth Presseller. Sister was the group's leader until her death.

She brought so much to the group: organization, enthusiasm, interest and dedication. She kept them informed and involved. And then there were the delicious treats she provided for the meetings. May God grant Sister Elizabeth eternal peace and joy. The new leaders are Sister Donna Demmer and Barbara Klein.

As the Presentation Partners associate group continues to meet, they know that they need to be in relationship with others in order to meet the broader needs of society. "When two or more are gathered together," the scriptures say, "there am I in the midst of them." The presence of God comes to them as they partner and learn from each other what their gifts are that are meant to be given for the life of their group and for the life of the world. They identify with the mission statement of the Sisters of the Presentation which states, "We are called to evangelize, offering hope and love to a broken world by incarnating the hospitality of God, confronting injustice and working for peace."

# Celebrating

## Associate Partnership

by KARLA BERNs, ASSOCIATE CO-DIRECTOR

Six newly committed associates joined 122 other men and women associates in sharing their belief in the mission of Nano Nagle and their desire to foster the Presentation spirit and charism while continuing within their own lifestyle.



Rose Rauch

On April 15, 2011, Rose Rauch made her first commitment as a Presentation associate in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Sisters Sheila Ann Dougherty and Annette Kestel mentored Rose through the orientation process. Other sisters and associates in the Cedar Rapids group are Marlene Myers, Ron and Donna Weaver, Lorraine Rudish, Sister Ann Jackson and Sister Joellen Price.

On May 26, 2011, in the Sacred Heart Chapel at Mount Loretto, five individuals committed as Presentation associates. Sisters Jessi Beck and Joy Peterson conducted the orientation and shared in the commitment ceremony of Stephanie Kronlage, Molly Olberding, Rebecca Derr and Radie and Ben Roberts.



### Interested in being an Associate?

**We invite you to become a partner in the Presentation mission.**

For more information, please contact the Office of Associate Partnership, 2360 Carter Road, Dubuque, Iowa, 52001 or email us at [associates@dubuquepresentations.org](mailto:associates@dubuquepresentations.org).

*Top photo: Sister Joy Peterson welcomes Rebecca Derr into the Presentation associate community. Bottom photo: left to right: Sisters Joy Peterson (far left) and Jessi Beck (far right) celebrate the newly committed associates: Stephanie Kronlage, Molly Olberding, Rebecca Derr, Radie and Ben Roberts and their son, Griffin.*



*Left to right: Back row: Lavonne Kerth, Sister Donna Demmer, Sister Sheila Kane and Jean Foust; Front row: Charlotte Danner, Sister Maria Goretti Dullard and Mary Danner. Not pictured Barbara Klein and Madonna Moeller.*

Presentation Partners pray, discuss and socialize together. As a result of their meetings, they are able to plan their outreach projects. One of their top priorities through the years has been Sister Jeanette McCarthy's Guadalupe Celebration on December 12. Each year they have provided wrapped gifts for the men, women, boys and girls of the Hispanic community. The group also contributed to the Rescue Mission for a participant to attend the program, "Breaking Barriers: Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting-By World." Another contribution was to Sister Paula Schwendinger and the hurricane victims in Florida. Presentation Partners also collected paper products and toiletries for Sister Barbara Rastatter at the St. James Pantry in Chicago and canned goods for the Dubuque Food Pantry. Members of the group have helped with Christmas baskets at the food pantry and a number of other projects.





# SISTER CLARICE KANE A Storyteller at Heart

by LEANNE WELCH, PBVM

Sister Mary Clarice Kane is a wonderful story teller especially delighting in sharing stories of when she was young, of her teaching career and of her travels. Her mealtime tales of past experiences keep one listening.

For 59 years Sister Clarice ministered in Catholic schools in Iowa, South Dakota and Illinois. She then brought her many gifts to Mount Loretto where she now resides. Born in Bremer County, Iowa, daughter of John and Frances Kane, Dorothy Elizabeth Kane attended rural Bremer County Schools, Immaculate Conception School in Fairbank and St. Columbkille High School in Dubuque. She entered the Sisters of the Presentation in 1933 joining her older sister, Sister Mary Eunice. Sister once said about herself, "My becoming a Presentation sister grew out of respect for Eunice and all the sisters who taught me. Their simple lifestyle and devotion to their work with students had a great impact on my decision."

Sister received her bachelor degree from Loras College majoring in elementary education and English. She later received a master's degree in education from St. Louis University. Throughout her years of teaching, Sister shared in the Presentation mission by teaching and serving as principal. In addition, she was part of the Clarke College faculty and taught the sisters as they prepared to become teachers.

While teaching at St. Columbkille she also served as a cooperating teacher. Sister Louise Scieszinski remembers: "I was fortunate to do part of my student teaching with Sister Clarice in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and later taught under her leadership while she was principal. Her wisdom and unlimited patience, combined with an astute mind, forthright direction and gentle humor were enduring blessings to me throughout my years in the education field."

Sister Beth Driscoll recalls, "As a seasoned teacher, Sister Clarice was well respected among faculty members. They sought her advice, enjoyed her camaraderie and loved serving on Community of Faith committees with her. She had creative ideas and followed through on them. She was an inspiration to all on the faculty."

Sister Suzanne Gallagher says that Sister Clarice is a nurturing woman who, as a teacher, had a heart for struggling students and a good sense of humor. She states that students from years past still keep in touch with her.

One of sister's hobbies includes traveling. She enjoyed trips to Canada, Lake Superior, Spain, Colorado and Wyoming as well as caves and caverns in Missouri, Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa. She also loves reading and crocheting items for her family and for the garage sale.

In the spring of 2009 Sister Clarice celebrated 75 years as a professed member of the community with the theme "Your paths are loving and sure, O God, for those who give witness to you through their lives." This she has done and continues to do as she tells her many stories.

*Sister Clarice Kane (seated) welcomes the friendly company of Sister William Allen.*

# Presentation Quest: New Orleans A Journey of Giving and Receiving

adapted from an article by DAWN BROSIUS, QUEST PARTICIPANT

A quest is defined as a seeking; a journey for adventure. The Presentation Quest, an immersion and service opportunity to New Orleans from June 4-11, 2011, was all of that and more. Participants varied in origin with three participants from St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Dubuque to others who came from as far away as Waterloo, Iowa. There were also a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and ages - 19-year-old college students to a grandmother of eight. If a quest is a seeking, what were they seeking?

"I think all of us were seeking to share our love, prayers and care with the victims of a terrible natural disaster, to see what we individually and collectively could do to help those who survived Hurricane Katrina over five years ago," states Dawn Brosius. "While there were many differences, a 17-plus hour van ride overnight to our destination enabled us to get to know the things we had in common such as three were college students, two people had both taken a service trip to Oklahoma, three of us were teachers, and two pairs were dad or mom and daughter. We found out, like a painter who starts out with three primary colors and begins mixing them, our differences and similarities combined painted a beautiful masterpiece. Come along and experience our adventure."

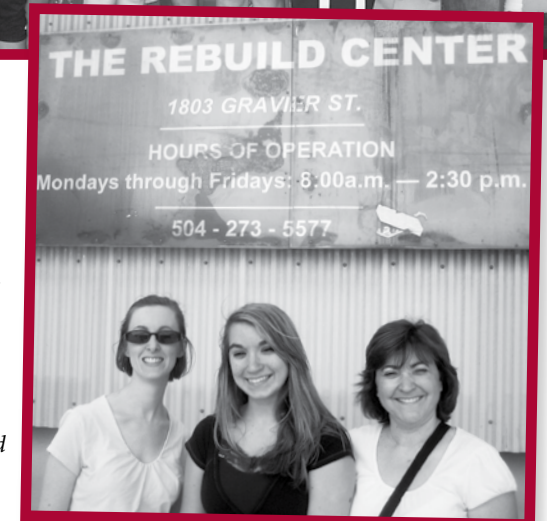
Working consisted of rotating among three places: the Café Reconcile, the Lantern Light center, and a homeowner's job site. Each day, two or three volunteers would go to either the cafe or the center while the rest of the crew got their materials and headed for the job site. Each morning the group would wake, shower and then head to the hostel's kitchen to eat breakfast and make sack lunches. Morning prayer led by individual volunteers got them off to the right start as they prayed in gratitude for their safety and successes, asked God to bless the people they would meet and the work they would do, and lifted up their intentions for the day and their loved ones at home...then it was off to their respective assignments.

Besides getting to know the people of New Orleans, in the evenings they had free time to explore the city. "What's a trip to New Orleans without experiencing Oysterfest, browsing the French Quarter and experiencing a first taste of Café Du Monde's beignets and iced coffees. Then there's Bourbon Street at night, its jazz street bands and mounted police," comments Dawn.

The night was then finished with a ride back to the hostel on a streetcar. As much progress is made in re-creating New Orleans as the locals call it, it is truly sad that the most heavily hit areas of the



Top photo: Happy to pose for a group photo, the 2011 Presentation Quest New Orleans service group looks forward to another trip together. Bottom photo: St. Joseph the Worker parishioners, Anne Marie Gruber, Mandy Brosius and Dawn Brosius visit the Rebuild Center in New Orleans.



lower 9th Ward, the most poverty-stricken, reflects the least amount of change. Many things still lay as they were over five years ago. Yet, as one of the young volunteers writes, "We each came to New Orleans with different gifts to rebuild and found ourselves inspired by the resilience in the lives that they live. We were privileged to observe the New Orleans spirit rebounding from all strife."

The week was an opportunity to learn and to grow, to put all trust in God through every high and low. Instead of saying goodbye as the experience came to an end, the group agreed that this is just a bend in the road. "We came to do service, but we walk away changed women and men," says Dawn.



# Sister Joan Lickteig *Tends the Light*

by ANN JACKSON, PBVM and BARBARA RESSLER, ASSOCIATE

“Changing ministry” as Sister Joan Lickteig described her transition from teaching, took her down a road she had never travelled – researching and drafting in broad strokes an informal history of the Dubuque Presentation congregation. She explained, “Without background as an historian, archivist or storyteller, I wondered, ‘How can I do this?’ I prayed, pondered and resisted the whole idea – but ultimately agreed to accept the challenge to ‘tend the light.’”

“Burning the midnight oil,” Sister Joan could daily be found in her office hip deep in written materials. Combing the *Annals* of the Sisters of the Presentation, archival records, community publications and listening to sisters’ recollections comprised the first leg of the journey. According to Sister Joan, “The history of a community is everyone’s story. It is collective.” Conversations hummed daily in the hallways and dining room – some Sister Joan solicited; other conversations occurred marked by uncanny synchronicity.

Though initially overwhelmed by the project, Sister Joan found herself delighting in daily discoveries and humorous anecdotes. Often, people inquired, “What gems have you found today?” Sister eagerly shared her latest find and a laugh. For example,

“A story comes from Monticello, Minnesota, days via Sister Mary Eunice Kane. While ... at St. Henry in Monticello, Mother Perpetua became acquainted with the cleaning product, Ajax. ...She found frequent uses for this wonder cleanser. One evening the janitor...tracked through the house unhampered by the white carpet. Some of the sisters wanted to start cleaning as soon as he left. Out of concern for her community companions losing sleep by undertaking a housecleaning project at that late hour, Mother Perpetua in all her propriety assured them that she could easily solve the problem in the morning by using a little of that ‘jackass.’”

The second year consisted of “chasing the manuscript around” from reader to reader. A strong spirit of collaboration marked her writing and editing process. Sister Joan sought out readers skilled in various areas, such as factual, legal and technical. She always welcomed responses.

“Summer 2009 – Autumn 2010 afforded me ‘a time of favor from the Lord’ as I lived into a new ministry. It is my hope,” states Sister Joan, “that this Presentation narrative will serve as an impetus to, once again, be wooed by the story of our beloved foundress, Nano, and that of her daughters.”



## ORDER FORM

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by Sister Joan Lickteig

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# *For the Rest of My Life* *Por Toda mi Vida*

by JENNIFER RAUSCH, PBVM

Nestled in the foothills of the Andes Mountains in southern Bolivia, the pueblo of Entre Ríos bustles with the flurry of activity generated by its businesses, schools and families. There was a pause in these daily activities of life as members of San Luis Parish gathered on September 8, 2011, to hear one of their own make a life-long commitment. Sister Mery Cari Paz, in a ceremony framed in great joy and celebration, professed her final vows as a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Starting with spontaneous applause that greeted the 10 Presentation sisters in the entrance procession and continuing with the enthusiastic music provided by the youth of the parish, the hearts of those present for the Eucharistic liturgy clearly felt the profound solemnity of the moment. In a voice that was strong and clear, Sister Mery proclaimed her vows: “...Prometo a Dios obediencia, castidad y pobreza por toda mi vida.” (I promise to God, obedience, chastity and poverty for the rest of my life). Bishop Francisco Javier del Río, Diocese of Tarija, then blessed Mery’s ring, a symbol of her love for and fidelity to God. The congregation declared their affirmation of Sister Mery’s promises by punctuating the setting with long lasting applause. The enthusiasm of those present seemed to mirror the sentiment of the Biblical psalmist: “The hillsides are wrapped in joy.” *Psalms 65, 12*

The celebration then flowed into the patio of the parish center as family and friends were welcomed to a reception under the evening stars. Sister Mery’s father, Don Felix Cari Miranda and her sisters, Nilda and Lola and brother, Osman, observed the great love and respect that parish members have for Sister Mery. They could not miss the unbridled enthusiasm of her First Communion students as they floated in an admiring circle around her wanting to be close to her and sensing her joy.

As a seven year old, Mery was attracted to the gentle spirit of the Presentation sisters who she came to know over the years. “I heard Sister Julianne teaching the people songs of praise to God. There was something special about her.” A spark of joy seemed to be ignited in Mery’s heart years later. Sister Mery completed her education and Licenciatura en Farmacia y Bioquímica at San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca and was employed as a pharmacist. It was in 2002, that she began working as a pharmacist with Sister Suzanne Takes in Entre Ríos. As Sister Mery identified more deeply with the spirit and mission of the Presentation community, she participated in the formative stages of affiliation and candidacy as an introduction to religious life. She was formally received into the community on January 11, 2006, and began her two-year novitiate



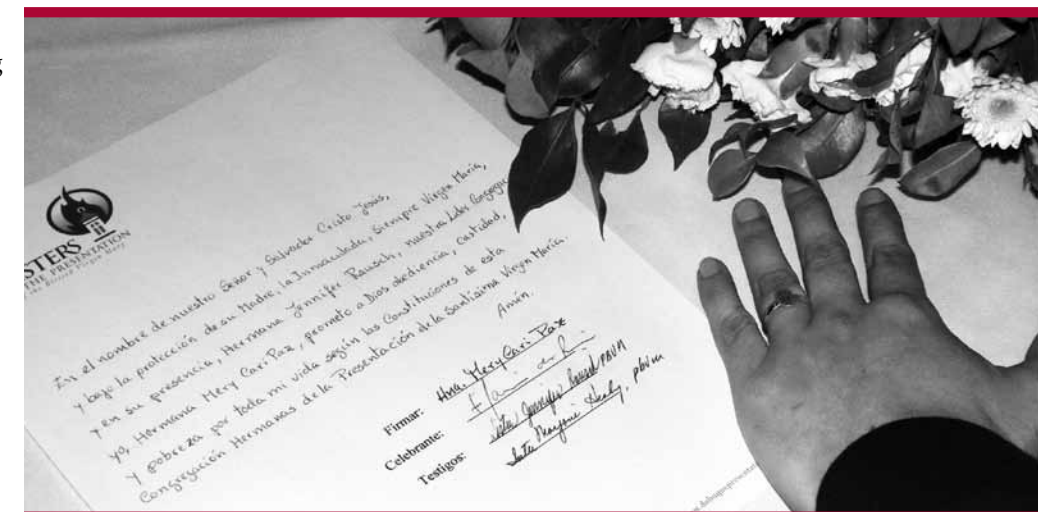
Left to right: Sisters Marge Healy, Mery Cari Paz and Jennifer Rausch celebrate Sister Mery's final profession.

program at the Inter-Congregational Formation Program in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Sister Julianne Brockamp accompanied Sister Mery as her formation director during that time. She made first vows on June 8, 2008, in the presence of her Presentation sisters in Dubuque as she integrated her Bolivian heritage with the traditions of her Iowa-based community. She was then engaged in ministry in San Luis Parish working with the youth. She is also now involved with the parish's First Communion preparation program and Bible study for children and adults.

During her vow ceremony, Sister Mery asked for the continued prayers and support of her family, the Presentation sisters and the members of San Luis Parish. She expressed her gratitude for all who have accompanied her on this journey through religious life.

In the future, her spirit of ministry will draw Sister Mery into the hillsides of Entre Ríos to bring the love of Jesus and to be blessed by all she meets. A line from her vow ceremony music may well reflect her focus on the mission of Jesus: “Llévame donde los pueblos necesitan tus palabras...donde necesitan mis ganas de vivir.” (Bring me to the places where the people need your Word...where they need my desire for life).

The Bolivian hills have rejoiced, many hearts have rejoiced, as this Bolivian woman has proclaimed her trust in God and vowed to live as a Presentation sister - “por toda la vida.”





# Celebrating a God of Love & Hospitality

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

“Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and with all your strength.” *Mark 12:30*. Taking inspiration from Jesus’ reply to the question: “What is the greatest commandment?” Presentation Sisters Julie Marie Marsh, Mary Lou Specha and Joetta Venneman celebrated 25 years of religious life on September 3 with family, friends and Presentation sisters and associates.

## *Sister Julie Marie Marsh*

Sister Julie Marie Marsh, grew up in rural Greene, Iowa, the daughter of Roger and Theresa Marsh who nurtured her in a deep faith and love for people. After high school Sister Julie attended Loras College in Dubuque and earned a Bachelor of Music degree with an emphasis in music therapy from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa.

**My journey to the Presentation sisters is too incredible to think that I arrived in this lifestyle by accident. I don’t believe in coincidences. God has certainly guided me every step of the way.**

*Sister Julie Marsh*

“When I was in college, I was very active in campus ministry,” states Sister Julie. “I remember the day when I decided that more young adults needed to experience God in the way my life had been touched through service with others, yet unsure at that time, how I was going to make that happen.” After entering the Sisters of the Presentation in 1986, Sister Julie served as a music therapist, associate director of diocesan catechetical services/special services and as a team member in the wellness program at Mount Loretto. In 1998 she earned a Master of Arts degree in pastoral studies in the area of liturgy from the University of St. Louis in Missouri. She served as pastoral minister and liturgist at Immaculate Conception Parish in Sioux City, Iowa, and following that as campus minister and director of liturgy and music at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

“I have been so very blessed,” states Sister Julie. “My journey to the Presentation sisters is too incredible to think that I arrived in this lifestyle by accident. I don’t believe in coincidences. God has certainly guided me every step of the way. As I reflect over my 25 years of commitment to religious life, it has not always been easy. There have been times of

doubt, times of loneliness, and many times of questioning, ‘What does the future hold for religious life?’ Somehow, the Holy Spirit sends people into my life to reassure me that I am exactly where I need to be. I have met so many interesting, talented and inspiring people that I would never have met if I had not chosen this path. They have helped me to become the person I am today.”

Earning a certification in spiritual direction, Sister Julie then served as director of formation and coordinator of immersion and service opportunities for the Sisters of the Presentation. Currently she is director of campus ministry at the University of St. Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas.

Sister Julie admits that it is exciting to discuss God with students. “When reflecting with them on life’s choices or their own purpose in life, the possibility of a ‘higher being’ always surfaces for them,” she says. “Religion or spirituality is a quest for many students. They simply need the right tools to uncover the Truth.”

Striving to fulfill her promise to live religious life in today’s world, Sister Julie keeps her eyes on her main goal – “to be faithful to the Gospel, the teachings of Jesus. I am very grateful for my opportunities to serve those in need with young adults just beginning the journey. Our trips to the poor in Appalachia, inner

city Kansas City, New Orleans and the prisons in Leavenworth keep me in touch with the real work of Nano Nagle.”

As the director of campus ministry at the University of Saint Mary, Sister Julie finds herself being stretched. “Not only do the liturgical changes in the Catholic Church provide hours of discussion among the Catholic students, but I am challenged in working with students of other faith traditions. I want to learn how to better serve their needs. I think that my desire to be faithful to the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus – to serve, to allow myself to be served, to love and allow myself to be loved is the greatest witness I can share on how I live religious life today. Students watch and hear everything. They help me to live my life authentically as a woman religious today. Their questions demand my recommitment every day.”

## *Sister Mary Lou Specha*

Sister Mary Lou Specha, grew up in Oak Lawn, Illinois, the daughter of Lorraine and the late William Specha. Inheriting her parents’ values – a mother who always serves and whose dad expressed genuine hospitality to all – Sister Mary Lou has journeyed into varied phases of living the Gospel of Matthew 25.

Earning a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in physical education at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois, Sister Mary Lou became the PE teacher at Our Lady of Guadalupe School in south Chicago. After entering the Presentation sisters in 1986, she then served as youth coordinator in Dubuque. After earning a Master of Divinity degree at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, Sister Mary Lou continued in ministry to young adults as the director of campus ministry at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.

Sister always wanted her co-workers at UNI to “walk with the poor.” They organized mission trips to Appalachia and Mexico and advocacy for justice issues as part of their campus ministry actions. Sister Mary Lou kept hearing a voice that spoke through a young person on her staff at the UNI campus ministry: “We need to go to New Orleans.”

The voice haunted Sister and by December 2005, after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf coast, she connected through Catholic Charities and took a group of UNI students to New Orleans, Louisiana. “The destruction and devastation were overwhelming. But I kept looking for the Catholics on the street. The Salvation Army was there. And, Catholic sisters were there,” she recalls.

The Presentation sisters who now staff the collaborative ministry, Lantern Light, Inc., were scheduled to begin the week Katrina hit. So, instead of working from a building, they worked from the trunk of a car and carried on a mobile mission to those affected by Katrina.

**I was always drawn to Nano’s charism of service to the poor when I first saw the sisters at Guadalupe school in Chicago where I taught. They had an important presence in that poor community. They taught me to know the people, walk with, serve them and not judge them.**

*Sister Mary Lou Specha*

“By their witness, the Presentation sisters at Lantern Light helped me recapture the spirit of why I came to religious life,” states Sister Mary Lou. “I was always drawn to Nano’s charism of service to the poor when I first saw the sisters at Guadalupe school in Chicago where I taught. They had an important presence in that poor community. They taught me to know the people, walk with, serve them and not judge them.”

Sister Mary Lou’s formative years on the south side of Chicago were eye-opening. She remembers that when she was 9 or 10 Martin Luther King Jr. marched in South Park; there were riots and turmoil. “I couldn’t understand the racism and what it was about. Now, since moving to New Orleans, I understand a little more about the riots, anger and frustration because of the color of skin,” she comments. In her present ministry, she encourages others by her example that “people need to walk shoulder-to-shoulder/black and white, white and black and to address racism together.”

For three years Sister Mary Lou has been ministering in New Orleans, as the executive director of Reconcile New Orleans, a community of concerned people committed to addressing the system of generational poverty, violence and neglect in the New Orleans area. She oversees all operations including life skills training, the business of Café Reconcile as the full-time staff trains students seeking to acquire skills in the food service industry and connecting the students to health services and to the churches of the area. “We work with the whole person,” states Sister Mary Lou. “The mission of Reconcile New Orleans, Inc., is to reconcile over poverty, prejudice and fear,” states Sister. The 12-week program includes orientation interviewing to discern readiness and barriers to success; job training, advocacy and connection to help the youth with housing, child care and education.

“This ministry provides a great opportunity for me as a woman religious. I know the players in town – mayor, police chief and others. They have a respect for me and for what we at Reconcile New Orleans do. They want to hear what’s going on and how we engage young people as ‘grass-roots’ agents and as mentors.”

*Left to right: Jubilarians Sisters Mary Lou Specha, Joetta Venneman and Julie Marsh.*





Hospitality and care are core in Sister Mary Lou's life in New Orleans. "I see young people's potential to use God's gifts. I'm so appreciative for having experienced hospitality at the very core of what it means when someone says, 'Miss Mary Lou, come on in, share what we have, come be with us.'" She knows care and protection from her neighbors when she hears of shootings in the neighborhood. "I know that my neighbors 'have my back.' I feel called to do this," comments Sister Mary Lou.

As she and her staff work together to help others overcome poverty, prejudice and fear, they collaborate with many individuals and groups to address the issues that stand in the way of young people in New Orleans being able to fulfill their potential. They give them skills for life and listen to them. "When looking into the eyes of a young person who comes to us with despair and hopelessness, I pray that we can provide a little love and support so that each can realize that there are other possibilities," states Sister. "We give them opportunities."

"I understand how I was drawn to the charism of Nano Nagle in service to the poor," she states. "I realize that in my 25 years as a Presentation sister I recaptured the spirit of why I came to religious life. As I reflect on the future of religious life, while it is sometimes bleak, I find hope. I love people and I love meeting them where they are. I feel that I am doing what God wants me to do by being present to the poor and by helping change a little the structures that keep them there."

### *Sister Joetta Venneman*

Sister Joetta Venneman grew up in rural Luzerne, Iowa, the daughter of Janet and the late Francis Venneman. Through her family she received a love and respect for the land and for learning. After high school she attended Mount Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree. When entering the Sisters of the Presentation in 1986, Sister Joetta began a journey of learning about Nano Nagle's dedication to the education of the poor children and of the connection between those who are made poor and the exploitation of Earth.

"As I reflect upon my 25 years of living within religious life, I realize that God has embraced my surrender and blessed not only the many with whom I have ministered but also has blessed and transformed my life in this process," remarks Sister Joetta who taught at Catholic schools in Peosta, Iowa, and in South Chicago.

"As a teacher I learned to broaden my vision of the world and to accept opportunities for becoming more inclusive and to share and integrate Catholic social teaching into my classroom," she continues. "It was in this ministry where I shared and integrated into students' projects the church's 'best kept secret' of Catholic social teaching."

It was while teaching in Catholic schools that Sister Joetta built relationships with those of other economic, religious, emotional and psychological status, those whom society often thrusts to the margins. Working with a team of educators, she experienced a variety of leadership styles that generated experiential opportunities for the youth.

**In my present ministry I am compelled to love not only my sister and brother in my neighborhood but to expand my neighborhood to include my sister and brother anywhere in the world and on Earth.**

*Sister Joetta Venneman*

"During these years, I learned to broaden my perspectives, hold my assumptions lightly and allow other cultures to speak to me about their struggles of being in and changing systems," reflects Sister Joetta. "Love for those at the margins called me to deeper surrender and creativity as God's Spirit took charge through me and I engaged with these students and their needs."

Working to maintain her passions for life-long learning, personal and spiritual growth, Sister Joetta earned a Master of Arts degree in cultural anthropology and social transformation from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. "The skills used to examine systems within this program of study and within my experiences since are currently used to analyze personal, organizational, governmental, religious and cultural systems." Currently Sister Joetta is the director of the Office of Global Ministries and serves as an educator and systemic justice advocate for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky. She is also the Presentation community's justice contact person for the International Presentation Association.

"For both the Sisters of Charity and the International Presentation Association, I engage with the United Nations and several coalitions on the local, state, national and international levels. Within these experiences, my global citizenship is identified and affirmed," states Sister Joetta.

"Here I see that love is again the value to which the global community is called – to deepen and enlarge perspectives and to analyze unfair systems. By traveling for the wider Charity and Presentation organizations to Australia, Bolivia, Canada, India, Mexico and Peru, my heart responds to stand in greater solidarity with sisters and brothers the world over in their struggles to liberate themselves from oppressive systems." Thus, Sister Joetta works with Catholic sisters and their associates to express solidarity with those made poor using education, legislative advocacy, vigils, marches, protests and prayer as catalysts and means.

"In my present ministry I am compelled to love not only my sister and brother in my neighborhood but to expand my neighborhood to include my sister and brother anywhere in the world and on Earth," concludes Sister Joetta. "To engage with the dance of religious life is to embrace a vision of the kin-dom as extensively as Jesus did. It is to be committed to the liberation of others from oppressive systems and to proclaim that Jesus is liberator of his own people. It is to engage with all beyond self, my religious community of sisters and family. I am able to come home to these persons and re-center amidst the world in which we live."



# Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

Featured below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation sisters, near and far.



## All in Good Company

Left to right: Sister Agnes Marie Lynch, Associate Sharon Loeffelholz and Sister Anne McCormick take pleasure in working together while helping Sister Agnes move to a different room during renovation.



## A Visit from Family

Sister Therese Marie Coleman enjoys a visit from her nephew, Tim Coleman, and his wife, Susan, from Washington.



## 2011 NCNWR Conference

Sister Beth Kress attended the 2011 conference of the National Communicators Network for Women Religious in New Orleans, Louisiana, September 27-30, with 100 other communications professionals. Sister Beth spent time doing service with other Presentation communicators. Pictured left to right: Dawn Maas (Aberdeen), Rosana Madrigal (San Francisco), Lisa Olson (Conference), Sister Julie Hurtado (US Province), Sister Beth Kress (Dubuque).

## Water Under the Bridge

Sister Kay Cota's photo of a view of the Mississippi River and the Julien Dubuque Bridge from Mount Carmel in Dubuque was published in the Telegraph Herald on September 27, 2011.



## You are invited to join us.

**November 5, 2011**  
Spirituality Retreat  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Dubuque, Iowa

**November 11-13, 2011**  
Discernment Weekend  
Sisters of Charity, Mount Carmel  
Dubuque, Iowa

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, please visit our web site at **[www.dubuquepresentations.org](http://www.dubuquepresentations.org)** or call 563.588.2008.

## Please pray with us.

**November 13, 2011**  
Foundation Day, 1874  
Establishment of Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque, 2002

**November 21, 2011**  
Presentation Day

**21st of each month**  
Pray for Vocations

**25th of each month**  
Mass for Benefactors

*Do you have  
news to share?*

**We would love to publish it.**  
**Please send your news items to:**

**[doorways@dubuquepresentations.org](mailto:doorways@dubuquepresentations.org).**



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## *Relationally* **SPEAKING**

*Sisters, Associates, Family, Friends in Brief*



**Sister Joan Brincks** completed the Lay  
 Formation program on May 7, 2011.  
 She also received a certificate of  
 completion for the Healing Touch  
 Spiritual Ministry program in June.



**Associate Barbara Ressler** was selected  
 for inclusion in the *Who's Who in America*  
 2012. This prestigious recognition reflects  
 her dedication and hard work placing her  
 among the country's most accomplished  
 professionals.



**Sister Dolores Zieser** is the treasurer for  
 the Dubuque Area Congregations United.  
 The members of DACU are people of  
 diverse faiths and beliefs who are united  
 by their belief in God, their concerns  
 for justice and their call to serve others.  
 They provide a supportive presence in  
 the community and beyond through the  
 generous sharing of their time, talents and resources.

On July 30, 2011, seven Presentations sisters made a  
 pilgrimage to the National Shrines of the North American  
 Martyrs. Sisters Jane Conrad, Louann Doering, Michelle  
 Gallagher, Jeanine Kuhn, Mary Hermann Platt, Louise  
 Scieszinski and Brigid Stanley all enjoyed the prayerful  
 journey and reveled in the history and zeal of the martyrs  
 in those early days of the 1600s.

Eleven Presentation sisters recently participated in the  
 Opening Doors capital campaign. With an overall goal of  
 \$1.5 million, Sisters Kay Cota, Louann Doering, Ellen Mary  
 Garrett, Joan Lickteig, Jeanette McCarthy, Anne McCormick,  
 Dolores Moes, Francesca Presseller, Jennifer Rausch,  
 Catherine Wingert and Dolores Zieser collectively clocked  
 38.5 hours as phonaton volunteers eliciting donations for  
 Maria House and Teresa Shelter which serve homeless  
 women and children in the Dubuque area.



On September 20, **Sister Rita Cameron** gave  
 a presentation on "Harvesting the Fruits  
 of Our Lives" at the Shalom Retreat Center  
 in Dubuque. Her talk centered around the  
 balancing act of how to fill each hour in the  
 day with love, compassion, humor and joy  
 while illuminating the lives of others.