



Living Spring

Monastery of the Visitation
Mont Deux Coeurs
14 Beach Road
Tyringham, MA 01264

Winter 2009

Journey Through 2009

By Sister Miriam Rose Niethus, VHM



We began the year of 2009 with piles of snow and a clear and windy day as we celebrated the World Day of Peace, praying that all warring conflicts will soon come to an end and all military personnel will return safely to their homes. In and around our usual activities, we were recovering from our December 8th sprinkler system flood. Throughout the following months, we had to have new flooring installed, ceiling panels replaced and rooms repainted.

On January 2nd we once again shared our Lessons and Carols with about 50 people who braved the chilly weather to spend a couple of hours with us in scripture and song as we continued to celebrate the beautiful season of Christmas.



Sr. Anne-Marguerite continues with cleanup from the December 8, 2008 flood.



The Epiphany Queen, Sister Miriam Rose, with her "lamb", Trooper.

Epiphany Eve brought the suspense of the Red Bean and the selection of the Epiphany Queen. It seemed at first that no one had found it in her piece of cake, but lo, the last person at the back table was discovered with it, Sister Miriam Rose. Sister abdicated to the Good Shepherd. Later in the month, Sister gave her Proclamation, escorted by our dog, Trooper, looking sheepish in his sheepskin "jacket"!

Just as we were about to celebrate our Holy Father St. Francis de Sales' Feast day, Sister Faustina Marie was called to jury duty: one day, one trial. As the perspective jurors were questioned as to their eligibility, Sister indicated an "impediment": she has a son who is a police officer! The judge, looking at this petite and innocent-looking nun, asked: "Ma'am, do you remember that you are still under oath?" Needless to say, Sister was excused. Now, Sister Mary Charles also received a notice. We were all curious as to what would happen when Sister innocently announced that her brother is a retired police captain of Wilmington, Delaware! Alas, Sister's call to duty was cancelled. We will have to wait until the next time she is called.

Our Bishop Timothy McDonnell of Springfield was with us as we celebrated our Holy Father's Feast day on the 24th. Mgrs. Christopher Connelly, Father Walter Gurgul, MIC, and two missionary priests joined the Bishop in this celebration, reminding us of St. Francis de Sales' own role as Bishop and his missionary activities in the Chablais area of France.

February opened with our Sacred Heart Talks and we moved quickly into Lent with Mother Mary Emmanuel's Challenge to respond to Our Lord's words from the cross: "I thirst". Holy Week was special again this year as Father Gary Dailey officiated, bringing with him some of our seminarians. *Continued. Please turn to page 2*



Sister Rosalind Moss

Easter, its Octave, and Divine Mercy Sunday ushered in the joyous season of Redemption. Fortunately this year, the weather was actually sunny for Divine Mercy Sunday! As always, thousands of visitors converged on the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge. Our contribution to the celebration at the Shrine is to give hospitality to the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate who assist with confessions for the pilgrims. Our season of visitors commences with the warm weather. We especially welcomed our Oblate Fathers throughout the spring and summer: Father Lewis Fiorelli, Father Joseph Morrissey, Father Richard de Lillio, Father James MacNew. We always look forward to visits with our “brothers”.



Sister Mary Charles with the new Mother Superior, Mother Mary Ruth.

April brought us a “visitor” to stay with our community for a year: Sister Rosalind Moss, who is founding a new active/contemplative community. Sister will spend the year in our novitiate to experience the formation period of religious life. Sister Rosalind is known for her appearances on EWTN and her writings, particularly her book, *Home at Last*. Sister is a joyful presence in our novitiate!

In May of this year we had our election of superior. Very prayerfully the Sisters prepared to elect a superior for another three-year term. Bishop McDonnell presided at our voting ceremony. The Holy Spirit chose Mother Mary Ruth Dolch to serve us once again! This role is not a new one for Mother since she served as superior from 1999-2004.



*Above & below:
Fr. Sean O'Mannion (left) and
Fr. Valentin Viguera (right)*

Immediately following the election, Father Valentin Viguera, a Salesian of Don Bosco, arrived here from Rome by way of Canada. Father serves the entire worldwide Order of the Visitation as our Religious Assistant where he represents us in Rome. Father is delightful. He is fluent in Spanish, French and Italian; however, Father is not fluent in English. So, we asked a dear friend and diocesan priest, Father Sean O'Mannion, to spend the five days with us as our translator. Father Viguera has compiled an extensive visual presentation of all of the world's Visitation monasteries. We thoroughly enjoyed seeing the monasteries, gardens and the Sisters from around the world!

At the end of his visit, Father surprised us with several beautiful spiritual gifts: First, Father has requested that our Holy Father, Pope Benedict recognize the 400th anniversary of our Order in 2010 by sending a special letter! Next, that a Jubilee Year be declared, allowing a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions for anyone visiting and praying in a Visitantine chapel during the year of celebration: January 24-December 12, 2010. And lastly, Father informed us that the contemplative monastery in the Vatican received eight Visitantine Sisters, on October 7, 2009 who will remain in prayer and service to the Holy Father for three years! A different Order of Sisters has this opportunity for a 3-5 year period. Pope John Paul II inaugurated this practice during his pontificate.



This year, our titular Feast of the Visitation coincided with the Feast of Pentecost! What a spectacular spiritual celebration we experienced! This was followed soon after by Corpus Christi with its traditional procession and the Feast of the Sacred Heart. This Year of the Priest we invited all of our diocesan priests to attend and share with each other their spiritual links. Father Roger Landry preached the Triduum honoring the Feast. Father chose the three themes of: St. Paul; St. Margaret Mary; the Sacred Heart. On the Feast, many of our diocesan clergy and seminarians were in attendance and we shared pleasantries over refreshments afterwards.



Corpus Christi procession

July 2nd arrived as a momentous day for our community as four Sisters were off on a Pilgrimage to France and our Holy Source, Annecy! Upon return, two weeks later, we were plunged into preparations for the recording of musical pieces to honor and celebrate our 400th anniversary in 2010. This experience brought more visitors from afar to join in song and praise.



Left: Mass on the Feast of the Sacred Heart



Right: Wendy Wright and Mother Mary Ruth

As you can see, we had many and varied guests with us this year as well as one who came without an invitation! On the way into chapel for Night Prayer, the Sisters looked out a window and caught sight of a black bear roaming back and forth along the building. It happened to be outside the laundry where he could smell the fabric softener, which we understand bears like! It became comical when Sister Marie Jacqueline went out onto the balcony of the community room and looked down at him as he looked up at her! Where is a camera when you need one? He ambled down the slope and approached the compost bin. Fearing a mess of redistributed garbage, three of our tallest Sisters went out onto the slope and yelled at him. It didn't seem to frighten him, but he did choose to wander through the trees and out of sight.

August brought us a wonderful visit and presentations by the author Wendy Wright, a scholar of Salesian spirituality. It is always a joy to share ideas and the results of scholarship with our Salesian family. A few days later, Peggy Weber, news reporter with our diocesan paper, *The Observer*, arrived with cameraman, and we were interviewed for an article about our upcoming 400th anniversary. Later in the month, we hosted the consecration of three women as Daughters of St. Francis de Sales, another wonderful branch of our Salesian family.

September found the days growing chilly; however, there was still time for some summer activities as Sister Anna and Sister Teresa Cordes took to canoeing on our Beaver Pond that had grown due to the extensive rains we have had this year. September also found us with five women making discernment retreats in our community. We pray that they will be led to know God's Will for them in their lives.

Once again, we welcomed Father Lewis Fiorelli, OSFS, former Superior General of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales and our current Auxiliary Religious Assistant, who gave us thought-filled presentations on the writings of St. Francis de Sales. Father was able to stay with us four days, giving us two presentations a day.

We now look forward to our Renewal of Vows, preceded by our Little Retreat, days of prayer in preparation for the Presentation of Our Lady and our vow renewals. Father James MacNew, OSFS will preach our retreat and celebrate Mass with us. Annually this renewal of vows is written in the Vow Book by each Sister.

As we near Thanksgiving and look back once again over a year filled with gifts, both spiritual and material, may this season help us reflect with gratitude for all that comes from the hand of a loving God and Savior. At this time of year we traditionally celebrate our Mother's feast day. Gifts lovingly hand made, entertainment joyfully prepared and lots of fun and laughter will be generated. Then we will begin that calm and wondrous season of Advent, where even the earth becomes more silent and the promised snow softens and covers all as we await once again the coming of our Savior.

During this Advent time, we will be sharing our prayer and song once more in The Ceremony of Lessons and Carols on Sunday afternoon, December 20th at 3:00. May you all be blessed abundantly for your kindnesses and friendship in sharing yourselves with us! +



Left: Sr. Anne-Marguerite works in the greenhouse



Right: Fr. Lewis Fiorelli, OSFS during one of his presentations.

Cross of Affiliation for Father Gary

By Sister Marie-Jacqueline Hanson, VHM



Fr. Gary Dailey

It all started out simply. “Let me know how I can help you.” A courtesy. Something of a cliché for most. But not for Father Gary Dailey. Soon after the Sisters of the Visitation moved to the Berkshires in 1993, they attended Mass at St. Mary’s Church in Lee, Massachusetts. Afterwards the newcomers stopped in the sacristy to introduce themselves to the pastor, Father Dailey. “Father was immediately very welcoming and offered his services and those of his parish whenever we would need them,” Sr. Joan Bernadette recalls.

Through the years Father Gary has been an invaluable friend. As our pastor he faithfully came to offer our community Mass every Wednesday, presided at the funerals of the Sisters, anointed our sick or dying members, and shared his many contacts when advice or expertise was required.

More recently, even with Father Gary’s appointment as Vocation Director for the diocese of Springfield, he continued his support. Father has been a vital part of our Sacred Heart Triduum, profession ceremonies, jubilees and other celebrations. Not only does he graciously agree to preside at all our Holy Week and Christmas week liturgies each year, but he also invites and trains select groups of seminarians to enhance the beauty and solemnity of each event. Father Gary has organized a program matching each seminarian of the diocese with a Sister “prayer partner” from our community. What a blessing and joy those contacts with the seminarians have been for us!

Little wonder, then, that our community proudly bestowed on Father Gary Dailey the Cross of Affiliation to the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary at a special ceremony in our Gathering Room on April 12, 2009. The silver engraved cross, designed by St. Francis de Sales himself and used as this saintly bishop’s Episcopal cross, contains relics of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, our Holy Founders, as well as those of St. Margaret Mary.

Thank you, Father Gary! Our hearts have been touched by your many kindnesses, your lavish generosity, and the sterling quality of your holy priesthood. May God be praised! +

Touching the Heart of God

By Sister Mary Charles Dougherty, VHM

St. Jane de Chantal, our Holy Mother and Foundress said: “that which touches the Heart of God most is gratitude”. In passing on this wonderful spirit of our Order as we look to our 400th anniversary, we offer gratitude and thanksgiving to all who have responded so generously to our needs throughout this year. Your loving friendship, your prayers, your generous giving from your own resources, humbles us and supports us.

Your material donations have allowed us to complete an insulation project that will protect the monastery from future freezing pipes and make it more energy efficient. We will begin Phase One of the window replacement project in 2010. The delay with this project was due to necessary repairs from our “flood” last winter.

Our individual thank you notes in return for your gifts are but a small expression of our love, appreciation, and concern for you. Your personal intentions expressed in your notes to us are taken into our hearts and placed in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and various intercessions at the Divine Office are our way of asking God to bless you as you generously bless us. We believe deeply in the power of intercessory prayer, as our life attests. May you be blessed in this Holy Season and throughout the New Year! +



A sister praying before the Blessed Sacrament for the All Souls intentions in the basket.

EACH FIRST SUNDAY OF
THE MONTH
AT 4 P.M.
(EXCEPT FOR THE
MONTHS OF
JANUARY, JULY, AND
SEPTEMBER)
OUR SISTERS OFFER
SPIRITUAL TALKS ON
THE SACRED HEART.



*The Sisters Of The Visitation Will
Be Eternally Grateful*



*To Be Remembered
In Your Will.*

Carrying On A Great Tradition

By Sister Joan Bernadette Phillips, VHM

We are all very excited to think that soon our entire religious Order, the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary - VHM, will be celebrating in 2010 four hundred years of existence.

A very vital part of our Order's history right from the start has been its orientation to honor the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our founder chose the emblem of the Pierced Heart as our coat-of-arms, and in the same century of our founding (the 17th), Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitandine like ourselves, received important revelations that led to the establishment of the solemnity of the Sacred Heart in the Church's liturgical calendar. So, since our earliest days, all Visitandines have been steeped and nurtured in this profound spiritual tradition.



A sister kneels at the entrance to the place where Jesus revealed His Sacred Heart to Sr. Margaret Mary Alacoque

In our own community's history, there has always been a strong thrust in promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart. In 1888 our monastery, then located in Wilmington, Delaware was established as a center for the Guard of Honor and each month meetings were conducted by our Sisters to spread the fire of Christ's love. From our archival sources, we know that hundreds of people responded to the invitation to attend these meetings or to attend Masses and other paraliturgical services to honor the Sacred Heart.

With our move to the Berkshires of western Massachusetts in 1993, God's providence has placed us in close proximity to the Marian Fathers in Stockbridge, MA. Their dynamic ministry to the Divine Mercy is truly compatible with our Sacred Heart tradition, highlighting so beautifully the core attributes of the Heart of God, love and mercy. So it is with much joy that we continue the great tradition that has been bequeathed to us. Each first Sunday of the month at 4 p.m. (except for the months of January, July, and September) our Sisters offer spiritual talks on the Sacred Heart. The talks are followed by Vespers and Benediction in our chapel at 5 p.m. For those who are not able to attend the meetings, we have made our Sacred Heart talks accessible through our website vistry.org and we are also happy to mail out copies as requested. Additionally, we offer membership in the association of the Guard of Honor for those who would wish to foster a deeper relationship with the Heart of Jesus through the offering of one's ordinary activities during a special hour each day. More information on our Sacred Heart activities can be obtained by contacting the monastery at 413-243-3995. It is our hope and prayer that the Sacred Heart will abundantly bless all of us who deeply desire to spread the inexhaustible treasures of its love and mercy in our contemporary world. +

Pilgrimage looks at the beginning of 400 years

By Sister Mary Emmanuel Dominguez, VHM

The year 2010 marks the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary! It was a Sunday and the feast of the Most Holy Trinity when on June 6, 1610 St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal and our First Founding Mothers made their way to the Gallery House to begin a new way of living out the Gospel. That day will always be an important day and date in the memory of each Sister of the Visitation. This past summer several of our Sisters had the opportunity to visit the sites of our foundation.

July 2 found Sister Anne-Marguerite, Sister Miriam Rose, and Sister Mary Emmanuel bidding the Community here at Tyringham a fond "Adieu" as they prepared for the first lap of their journey. Sister



l to r: Sr. Mary Emmanuel, Sr. Miriam Rose, Sr. Anne-Marguerite

Rosalind Moss, who is spending the year in our novitiate, also joined them on this holy pilgrimage. By 6 P.M. these four were joined by a group of about fifteen more Salesian Pilgrims who were boarding a trans-Atlantic flight to France via Geneva, Switzerland! Thanks to the generosity of a benefactor, these Sisters were able to make this unforgettable pilgrimage to Annecy and all the important places that reflect the foundation of the Order of the Visitation.

We wonder if St. Francis de Sales ever envisioned a 757-Jet flying over Lake Geneva with his spiritual daughters disembarking and boarding a bus to travel to Annecy. The pilgrims began their journey around the City of Geneva with a special prayer service remembering how this "City of the Great Reformers" was so precious to Francis' desire for religious unity and reconciliation. St. Francis had to steal his way into the city in the late 1590's ... and 400 years later so much has changed. We visited the Cathedral of the exiled Bishop of Geneva, which is now the Cathedral of the Protestant population. As we walked into the Cathedral an organ concert softly greeted us in welcome. How special was that!

As the warmth of the July morning sun embraced us, Geneva greeted the Daughters of St. Francis de Sales and from that point on beauty surrounded us on every step of the journey.

When the remainder of the Salesian Pilgrimage group arrived from various points throughout the United States and England we were about thirty-three. How exciting to be together for the purpose of coming to know our history and our roots in a most unforgettable manner! Perhaps the most unbelievable and most impressive experience was nearing the end of the hour bus drive from Geneva to Annecy. The French countryside is breath-taking in beauty, expansiveness and antiquity! As we climbed the hills and traversed the highways and roads only one communal gasp of awe was heard as the spire of the Visitation Monastery Basilica came into view and a lone voice announced: "There it is!" Utter silence for a brief moment preceded a thunderous round of applause and exclamations of sheer delight. For most of the pilgrims this was a first time experience. Seeing the Basilica brought home the reality that this was all really happening!

To speak of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal is one thing, but to actually walk on the paths and into the buildings and on the streets and paths so often described in their writings and the writings of our first Sisters brought home the reality of these persons to each of the Pilgrims, especially the Sisters of the Visitation.

Sister Mary Grace McCormack, VHM of St. Louis and Sister Mary Paula McCarthy VHM of Mendota Heights rightfully receive special kudos and thanks for keeping the Spirits of Francis and Jane ever present on the journey. Both Sisters prepared our venue in reminding us through readings and prayer-filled moments to open our hearts to the memories and presence of our Holy Founders. Our Sisters chose the most significant Salesian sites for us to visit. Teachers to the core, they never lost a moment to refresh our memories with salient facts about persons, places, events and some "family secrets" that made each experience so valuable, real and precious. Lest we forget any event of our journey, a



Sr. Mary Emmanuel with her niece Elizabeth Huffman at the childhood home of St. Margaret Mary.

special Annecy Pilgrimage booklet accompanied us each day for every event of our voyage!

How wonderful to meet more members of our Salesian Family, Sisters of the Visitation, Oblate Sisters of St. Francis de Sales and the countless people whose lives have been touched by the spirit of the Visitation. The pilgrimage took us to the sites associated with our saints: St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane de Chantal, St. Margaret Mary, Venerable Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, Father Louis Brisson, St. Leonie Aviat and Sister Francis Therese (better know to us as Sister Leonie Martin, the sister of St. Therese of Lisieux). The litany goes on to include others: St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, St. Catherine Laboure, St. John Vianney, St. Therese of Lisieux and her parents who are now among the blessed. All, all are there honored and revered. May they remember us as they now enjoy the fullness of God's beatific presence! How can we ever recount these blessings?

Every monastery of the Visitation opened its doors to us both lay and religious so that we would not be deprived of any graces, blessings and joys that entering into the sacredness of these cloisters had to offer. Perhaps the highlight of our first days was being at our "holy source" - Annecy where our Holy Founders' sacred remains are so prominently displayed in glass reliquaries at the head of the side aisles. Yes, images that were so familiar to us, gave way to the reality of sight and touch! Our prayers embraced the universe, each of you, all our loved ones, our Sisters here and throughout the world. What a glorious moment! The experience continues to unfold even as we recall memories of these days.

The reality of St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal is still alive for the people of the local villages, towns, hamlets. Taking time to visit Paris with its impressive sites: the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Champs Elysees, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe. These made us smile and 'humbly proud' to know that Our Holy Father Francis had made a special impression on some of these very places, having lived there for extended periods of time. Not everything was there when he was, but knowing that he knew some of these same places was awe-inspiring.

As we travelled the beautiful country, which is France, we were amazed at its size! The beautiful flowering fields, the white cows, the wheat, the sunflowers seemed to make special efforts to please us! All of this surrounded the homes of our Holy Founders! What majestic stately palaces and fortresses opened their doors to us as families bid us "Come in and see..." where our saints once lived. It was as if St. Francis and St. Jane would appear any moment. How homey these regal places are! How loved and cared for they continue to be even now at great cost to their owners!

Continued. Please turn to page 11.



l to r: Sr. Mary Emmanuel, Sr. Miriam Rose, Sr. Rosalind, Sr. Anne-Marguerite on the site of the Castle of Sales in Thorens.



l to r: Sr. Mary Emmanuel, Sr. Miriam Rose, Sr. Anne-Marguerite on Lake Annecy



l to r: Sr. Anne-Marguerite, Sr. Clare Chantal, Sr. Mary Joseph and Sr. Miriam Rose at Verosvres, St. Margaret Mary's childhood home. Sr. Clare Chantal and Sr. Mary Joseph are Visitandine Sisers from Waldren, England.

CD Adventure

By Sister Bernadette Therese Lash, VHM



The Anniversay Choir in the Chapel.

In August of 2008, Sr. Anne-Marguerite was seated at a table with Deacon Mike Newman, OSFS, and Tobbyn Smith-Hanen, an alumna of St. Paul Visitation school. The table at which they sat was located at the Mendota Heights Monastery in Minnesota, and the occasion that had brought them all together was the annual Salesian Conference. The bond that united them was participation in the Music Ministry for the conference.

Enter the Holy Spirit.

Someone said wouldn't it be a great idea if we could somehow make a music CD of praise and thanksgiving to God in honor of the 400th anniversary of the Order of the Visitation? Well yes, now that it was mentioned, that would be a good idea. Yes, the more it was discussed, the better the idea seemed. Question after question arose.

How could we record it? Who knows about such things? Where should we record it and when? From whence would we get the money to do it? Who would sing? Play instruments? We need a committee. What about the music? We need someone to direct the whole thing.

Some answers came quickly, others eventually emerged. Sr. Anne-Marguerite remembered our friend and benefactor, Dr. Steve Tracey who had previously recorded two Christmas CD's for us. We learned that he would be glad to do this again, gratis. Because he lives here near the Tyringham Monastery and works as an ER doctor nearby, this meant that we would of necessity need to record in Tyringham. Our Community had learned a thing or two about producing a CD and so we offered our hard-won knowledge to the cause.

This lofty endeavor had a very low budget. O.K., there was no budget. Still, the committee went forward. The Second Federation of the Visitation in the U.S. supplied for the travel of those who needed to travel to Tyringham. The CD Committee met weekly via an online chat room to discuss plans. This is how all the details were hammered out (or, speaking more gently, smoothed out.) Music was discussed at length and it was decided that almost everything would be taken from composers in the public domain (Mozart, Beethoven, Caccini, Vivaldi) to avoid paying copyright fees. Three songs, however, were chosen which were by modern composers. Finally, to bring a personal Salesian/Visitation character to this creation, some original pieces were added. Mike Newman wrote three lovely compositions: *Psalm 139*, *Tenui Nec Dimittam*, and *Live Jesus*. Bob Hindel, a friend of our Sisters in St. Paul, put music to the words of a hymn to St. Jane, written by Sr. Alice Marie Landers, VHM.

Next came procurement and dissemination of the music to all the participants who generously shared their talents for the glory of God. By early winter of '09, Matt Alcombright, a Seminarian for our diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, was invited to conduct the group. He has helped us previously for our Ceremony of Lessons and Carols. In addition to working on the committee, Tobbyn's beautiful voice as well as her Salesian education helped her blend right in and definitely added to the recording and the experience. She and all the visiting Sisters stayed with us in the Monastery. The Oblates were lodged in our guest suite.



Matt Alcombright directing.



The choir at work.

So. When to record? People coming from different monasteries of both Federations, priests and postulants from the Oblates with varied schedules, a seminarian with tests to study for and papers to write, an alumna with a job far away from us, and a doctor with on-call hours in the emergency room—how to get everyone together under one roof? I am not sure how it came to agreement, but a time was arranged and everyone came here for the week of July 19-25th 2009. Up until that week many of us had not met one another and we surely had not sung together as a group. Everyone had practiced the music and parts on their own and it wasn't until July that we first began to sing as a choir. This is where our friend, Matt, was invaluable to us. His musical background and experience in directing choirs enabled us to create a unity of blending, of harmony, of sound. Due to Dr. Steve's ER shifts, we were limited to two days for recording.

The schedule we undertook for practice was grueling and we were already flagging on the second day. But it had to be done and we plowed on, all for the glory of God! The first time we recorded a song, we were told we had to do it again because the sensitive microphones picked up every page turn! This was not the only time we had to re-record. As a matter of fact, we had to redo several recordings. Matt's face was a marvel of expression as he coaxed, cajoled, begged, threatened and practically dragged a particular sound out of us. It was quite an adjustment, at least for the Sisters, to settle into the dimension of sound that men's voices created as we sang. We found that men's voices fill up space in a way that women simply cannot do. It was fantastic!

Sr. Mary Claudia of our Rockville, VA monastery accompanied us on the organ and we were all amazed and impressed at her skill and mastery of her instrument. Her equanimity when asked to play the introduction to the Pleni Sunt Coeli again and again was a marvel to behold.

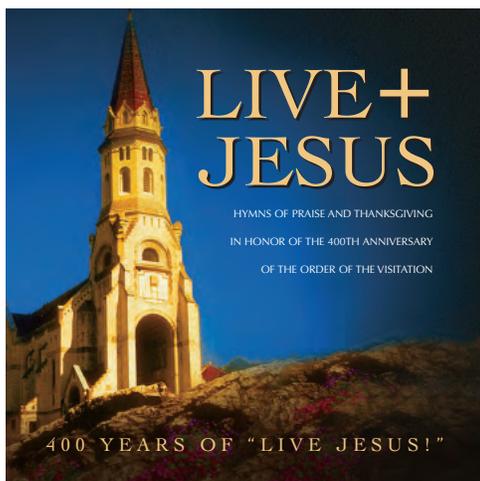
I would like to mention two of the original compositions both written by Mike Newman, OSFS. The first, *Tenui Nec Dimittam* loosely translated from the Latin, means "I have taken hold and will not let go". The words of the text are taken from Song of Songs and hold deep meaning for the Oblates: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, set me as a seal upon your arm. I have taken hold and I will not let go." The closing hymn on the CD was also the very last one we recorded. When we were preparing to sing it, we clarified with Matt that the words were well known and very dear to each and every one of us, as the text was written long ago by our Holy Father, St. Francis. "In that case," Matt said: "Don't sing it. Pray it." We were given our pitches. We prayed, "Live Jesus! Jesus whom I love! Live Jesus whom I love! Live Jesus! May God be blessed! Now and forever more! May God be blessed!" +



l to r: Sister Mary Emmanuel Dominguez, Dr. Steven Tracy and Sister Mary Claudia Lee



*Sister Alice Marie Landers conducting chant.
l to r: Tobbyn Smith-Hanen, Sister Megban Baruzzini, Sister Judith Marguerite Gray and Sister Anne-Marguerite Potchen*



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Chantal Artisans: A Work of Prayer

By Sister Judith Marguerite Gray, VHM

“Bezalel, therefore, will set to work with Oholiab and with all the experts whom the Lord has endowed with skill and understanding in knowing how to execute all the work for service of the sanctuary...those whose hearts moved them to come and take part in the work...” Exodus 36: 1-2

Nestled within the confines of our monastic home, the skilled hands of Sr. Gemma Maria Parisi, Jean Killackey, and Mary Ann Fennelly are actively engaged in “work for the service of the sanctuary” in the quiet and peaceful ambience of the vestment room. Known as Chantal Artisans, the project was formulated in 2006 as a business venture to augment the income of the monastery. Sr. Gemma Maria, a master needleworker, directs the business and has been designing and crafting fine liturgical vestments and altar goods for well over 40 years. Using the skills she acquired as a child in Italy, Sister’s gifts progressed naturally to the development of Chantal Artisans. A large storage space in the lower level of the monastery was transformed into a suitable workspace through the generosity of kind benefactors who absorbed start-up costs. Consultation for the business was enhanced by the assistance of a committee of local business professionals who helped with planning and implementation. The further employment of the creative talents of Jean and Mary Ann have enabled Chantal Artisans to design several lines and styles of beautifully crafted quality vestments, as well as other liturgical goods.



l to r: Mary Ann Fennelly, Jean Killackey and Sister Gemma Maria sewing in the Chantal Artisan workroom.

Initial marketing strategies have included distribution of brochures to over 4000 parishes in seven dioceses and the creation of a website. However, most of the orders received are through the “word of mouth” of purchasers. Attentiveness to detail is a hallmark of Chantal Artisans. Meticulous care is given to each piece right down to carefully assuring that the stitching blends with the color and design of the fabric. The women consider their work an artistic collaboration to give glory to God by enriching the beauty of the liturgy and they take much pride in the quality and precision of the finished product. Sr. Gemma Maria explains that because the Holy Mass is a most beautiful exercise of faith, the vestment should not detract from the liturgy, but rather, serve to enhance it. Even the Italian names representing the different styles were carefully derived from the impression they produce. For example, the new line, Lucetta (Light), was given because of the sense of radiance emitted from the gold damask. Likewise, Regno (Royal) was chosen because the pattern’s design contains a cross and a crown reminding us of the fidelity of Jesus in His work of salvation.



Sr. Gemma Maria

Chantal Artisans has developed some innovative new offerings in recent months such as a custom canopy for Eucharistic processions and a versatile deacon’s stole. This stole is of special interest to transitional deacons (those who will continue toward priesthood) because its design enables conversion to a priest’s stole after ordination with only a few minor alterations. Liturgical vestments utilized by other religious denominations can also be ordered, as can custom orders for various liturgical events. Sr. Gemma Maria, Jean, and Mary Ann take great joy in seeing that their customers are pleased with their purchases.

Through diligence and hard work, the business has achieved the financial milestone of “breaking-even” after its first three years of operation. Plans are now underway to expand the market to include seminarians, newly ordained deacons, and to continue reaching out to parishes and dioceses. A new brochure featuring memorial gifts is also planned for distribution in 2010, enabling families to donate a beautifully crafted vestment in honor of a loved one. Chantal Artisans is well on the way to becoming a securely established business supporting the life of the monastery. +

Golden Anniversary



Jacob and Irmgard Bucher, Affiliates of the Monastery, celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on July 13, 2009 with a special blessing at Mass in our Chapel.

We wish Jack and Irma many more years of happiness together. God Bless you! +

Pilgrimage *Continued from page 7.*

The influence of the Visitation and all the many graces and benefits bestowed upon our Holy Order was perhaps most visibly presented to us at the magnificent Basilica atop Montmartre. Here the Basilica honoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus stands to embrace the world even as this spiritual fortress overlooks the entire city of Paris. One can hear the words of Jesus echoing throughout the city and to the world, "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest." This House of God is still entirely focused on celebrating the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and countless people, pilgrims, curiosity seekers enter into His presence from dawn to the darkest hours of the night. It never ceases. What an array of different people come and go ... Yes, even we found ourselves standing arm and arm with our brothers and sisters from all parts of the world. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is truly a home for the people of the world. We thank Jesus for letting our Holy Order be such a special part of that place.

One of our Sisters, when asked what her best memory of this pilgrimage was for her stated that "I found the answer in my own heart!" Yes, deep within our hearts lay that deep relationship with our Holy Founders and those closest to them! For we are each a part of that "long line of Visitandines" that our Holy Father envisioned in his prayers to the Father! We may be back in the USA, and we are grateful to be here, yet we are one within this Body of Christ. We are still pilgrims who know that our home is not in this world. Now we can

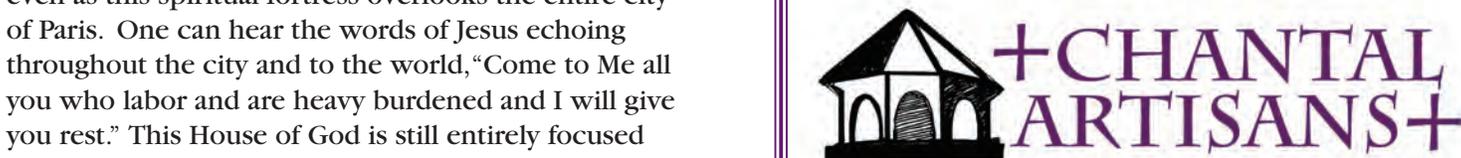
We Remember

Sister Francis Therese Leary will be sadly missed by her family, many friends and the Sisters of our Monasteries of Rockville, Virginia and Tyringham, Massachusetts.

Sister was professed in Wilmington, Delaware on April 12, 1946. When our Monastery of Frederick, Maryland

was in need of assistance, Sister generously responded by joining them. The three Leary sisters, Sr. Mary Paula and Sr. Marguerite Therese and Sr. Francis Therese were the backbone of that monastery in its last years. In 2005, upon the closing of the Frederick Monastery, Sister accompanied Sr. Marguerite Therese to Rockville. Sister was cared for lovingly by our Sisters of Rockville until her death on July 24, 2009.

May she rest in peace. +



Invites you to consider purchasing a vestment as a gift for jubilees, ordinations or in memory of a loved one.

Contact Sr. Gemma Maria at 413-243-0814

see that we have seen more clearly that we have been given such a great gift in our Holy Vocation as Daughters of St. Francis and St. Jane. We too look out over the same meadow with our Holy Mother St. Jane de Chantal and say, "Look, there He is..." May God be blessed! +



From The Desk Of Mother Mary Ruth

The Sisters here in Tyringham want to wish each of you a very blessed Christmas. We are grateful to each one of you for your prayers, your friendship, and your support! Thank you for letting us share in your burdens, your joys, and your hopes. As we prepare for the wonders of Jesus' coming to us at Christmas and in the New Year, may you enjoy the Peace of Christ and enter into the year of 2010 with confident trust in God's Providence.

As we are about to begin our journey into the long-awaited year of 2010, we are preparing to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the foundation of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, the religious order to which we belong. The Visitation was founded by Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane de Chantal on June 6, 1610 in Annecy, France. Visitation Monasteries throughout the world will celebrate the 400th Anniversary throughout the year of 2010. This year of celebration begins January 24, 2010, the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, and ends on December 12, 2010, the former feast of Saint Jane de Chantal.

Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, will write a special letter recognizing the 400th Anniversary of the founding of the Order and granting a Plenary Indulgence to all who visit our Chapel, which will be a Pilgrimage Site, during this year of Jubilee. The main event that our monastery will hold will be a special Eucharistic Liturgy celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Order on the anniversary date itself, June 6, 2010. This Mass will be celebrated here at our monastery and will be open to the Faithful of the diocese along with our families, friends, benefactors and all who would wish to attend.

We hope to have special Eucharistic Celebrations throughout the year with our Bishop, clergy of the Diocese of Springfield and of our neighboring dioceses, our Marian Fathers who are our chaplains, and our diocesan deacons and seminarians.

A CD recorded in July 2009 featuring the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales, Visitation Sisters and their Associates from throughout the United States and Seminarians of our diocese is available for sale in our gift shop. A Commemorative Book, detailing the history of the Visitation in this hemisphere and especially in the United States, is also available at this time. The sale of these items will help to defray the costs related to our celebrations. We also hope to have a display of memorabilia and other items of historical interest in the narthex, where all of our visitors will be able to view them throughout the year.

We invite you to participate in our Jubilee Year by making a visit to the monastery and joining the celebrations. +

Gratefully,
Mother Mary Ruth Dolch, VHM

Our Christmas Gift to You is a NOVENA OF MASSES

that will be offered at our
monastery church for all our
Relatives, Friends and Benefactors
from our
Christmas Midnight Mass
to
New Year's Day Mass.

God be praised!



**You are invited to join us in our worship
THE CEREMONY OF LESSONS & CAROLS
3:00 p.m., December 20, 2009**

**CHRISTMAS MIDNIGHT MASS
(12:00 a.m.)
preceded by Vigils at 11:00 p.m.**

**CHRISTMAS DAY MASS
9:30 a.m.**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY MASS
9:30 a.m.**

We wish you much joy and many blessings for Christmas and the New Year 2010.