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OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH NEWSLETTER



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2015 The Year of Consecrated Life

*In celebrating the **Year of Consecrated Life** announced by Pope Francis, the newsletter staff asked members of religious orders to share their thoughts on this topic. We thank them for their contributions and hope you enjoy reading them!*

From the Academy of the Holy Angels: Sister Mary Foley, SSND

My journey to become a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND) began when I was in Junior High and High School. I felt that God was calling me to do something great with my life. The more I asked God to help me figure out what exactly that might be, the stronger the call to become a Sister grew in my mind and heart. At first I thought about joining the Peace Corps. I knew they did good work in helping others. In the end, God wanted me to make a permanent commitment that was based on my faith in God.

I responded by entering the School Sisters of Notre Dame. I completed college and started out as a teacher of Physical Education and Religion in a high school in Rochester, NY. I have actually traveled the world trying to bring the Good News of how much God loves us. The School Sisters of Notre Dame are in 34 countries in the world. From Rochester, I was called by my Congregation to go to Liberia, West Africa. I ministered there teaching science, history and Religion in a Junior and Senior High School. When I returned to the United States, I was ministering in a high school in Boston, MA and studying during the summers to get a Masters of Divinity from Seton Hall. My life since then has been filled with a variety of ministries with both adolescents and adults.

A few years ago, I returned to school at Fordham to get a social work degree. I am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at the Academy of the Holy Angels. In addition, I am lucky enough to be the handler for our school dog, Luke. He is a therapy dog and I accompany him to many places where he gives love and comfort especially to children.

Being a Sister allows me to be with many people, always trying to bring to them the message of how much God loves us all. The mission of the SSND is to help people to reach the fullness of their potential. This is often done through education. In this way, we try to make our world a better place.

Information about the School Sisters of Notre Dame can be found at www.ssnd.org.



From St. Joseph High School: Brother John Dunning, FMS

In recent years the whole Church has been invited to reflect on various elements of our tradition: 2009-2010 was devoted to priests while 2012-2013 was the Year of Faith.

This year, Pope Francis proclaims “The Year of Consecrated Life” inviting the People of God to learn more about the witness of those in consecrated life and in doing so, to deepen our awareness of the diverse charisms and spiritualities of the various religious institutes. Pope Francis wants us “to look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future in hope.” We are called to “Wake Up the World.”

Brother Ben Consigli, FMS, Provincial of the Marist Brothers of the United States commented on the Year of Consecrated Life saying; “Although the crises that affect the world and the Church are felt deeply within religious life, religious are called to remain full of hope, based not on our own power, but on trust in God who loves us unconditionally.”

The Marist Brothers were founded in 1817 in rural France by a young French priest, Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840). Marcellin (declared a Saint in 1999) responded to God's call to form a



religious community of Brothers dedicated to educating youth and conveying the love of Jesus Christ through Mary, thus the name Marist. Today the Marist Brothers are an international community of more than 3000 Catholic Brothers dedicated to making Jesus known and loved through the education of young people, especially those most neglected. Internationally, Marists extend across the globe in 79 countries.

Growing up in the Bronx, New York, I was taught by the Marist Brothers at Saint Helena High School (now Msgr. Scanlan H.S.) My life as a Marist brother these past 50 years has brought me to teaching in New York and Texas, social work in New Jersey and New York, and counseling in school settings primarily in New Jersey. Religious life today remains constantly evolving, challenging, invigorating and very rewarding; a life for which I am most grateful to a good and gracious, forgiving and merciful God.

For more information about the Marist Brothers see www.maristbr.com

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From Immaculate Heart Academy: Sister Carol Ann Lockwood, S.C.

What an exciting time! “Wake Up World” is the theme identified by Pope Francis when he named 2015 the Year of Consecrated Life. The aims of the Year are three-fold. First is a call to those living in consecrated life to renew their commitment to vowed life. Second, the year calls for a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the witness and service of those who have lived in consecrated life. Third is an invitation to the next generation to “wake up the world to a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!”

My name is Sister Carol Ann Lockwood and I am a Sister of Charity. As a Sister of Charity, the mission I have been called to is that Jesus Christ came “to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour” (*Luke 4:18-19*).

The mission of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth is to proclaim and live this Gospel of Jesus Christ. From the beginning our ministry has encompassed commitments in education, health care, and pastoral and social services. (Toward Boundless Charity, the Constitution of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, - C 10,

You may ask, “What does it mean to be a person consecrated to God?” I see this call as an invitation to be available to all persons especially those most in need. This was my primary reason for responding to God’s invitation. I taught at Park Ridge High School and felt that my life as a teacher was missing something. I had been active in my parish church and met a sister who was joyful about her work, lived in community and had a deep faith in God. I saw this as a very interesting life choice. As I explored this life of ministry of service, prayer and community, I realized that this was indeed a very valid and life giving choice that I have never regretted.

My ministry continues to be in education sharing the faith journey with the young women of Immaculate Heart Academy. I live in a supportive and prayerful community in the city of Newark with four other Sisters of Charity. Together we sustain and challenge one another to go forth to help bring about the Kingdom of God.

For information about the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth go to www.scnj.org.

Will this be the year that you contribute?

Send an article or picture soon!

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We’re on the web. Visit us at www.urolm.org.



From a Family Member: Sister Elizabeth Brandreth, RSM

One of the aims of the 2015 Year of Consecrated life is to look at the past with gratitude. I am grateful for God's faithfulness in my life's journey which began in 1937 as the first child of Edith and John Brandreth. We were soon joined by my sister Anne (Betty Stapleton). In 1949 we moved from the Bronx to Ridge Avenue in Park Ridge. I began to consider very tentatively a call to religious life after attending the vow ceremony of my cousin Joan who was a Mount Saint Vincent Sister of Charity. After I graduated from Park Ridge High School, I attended Mount Aloysius Junior College in Cresson, PA, where I got to know the Sisters of Mercy. My desire to become a sister grew, as I experienced the special concern and caring that these sisters showed to the students.

In 1957 I entered the novitiate of the Scranton Province of the Institute of the Religious Sisters of Mercy where with 14 other postulants I began my journey as a Sister of Mercy. In the beginning we focused more on the practicalities of religious life and education but as we matured and experienced the fruits of Vatican II, we entered more deeply into the gift of consecrated life.

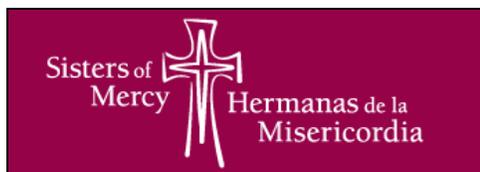
The Sisters of Mercy web page succinctly describes our mission: "Inspired by our founder, Catherine McAuley, we Sisters of Mercy, respond to a call to serve people in need and commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ. We profess lifelong religious vows

of chastity, poverty and obedience and service to people who are poor, sick and uneducated. To this end, we serve God's people through education, health care, social services, and ministries that further social, political, economic and spiritual wellbeing."

The Catherine McAuley Center, which cares for homeless women and children, has been a special ministry for me. I was one of three sisters who began the ministry in 1984 by opening our convent home to offer extra bedrooms as housing for homeless women and children. My regular ministry was serving as hospital librarian at Mercy Hospital in Scranton; however, in the evenings I got to interact with the women and children. This gift of walking with these women and children was a real learning experience for me.

A special part of being a Sister of Mercy is sharing our lives as we seek to grow in oneness and deeper expressions of Mercy for our world. I continue to be grateful for God's faithfulness in my life. One wonderful example of this is the love and support of my sister, Betty and her husband, Jack and all the Stapleton family. Therefore, Park Ridge and Our Lady of Mercy continue to be part of my life.

For information about Sister Elizabeth's community goto www.sistersofmercy.org.



From Immaculate Heart Academy: Sister Margaret Gaffikin, FSP

What a challenge from Pope Francis as he calls for a year focusing on Consecrated Life. When I read, “I am counting on you to wake up the world” I was feeling that this has indeed been the journey that I felt called to so many years ago.

Let me introduce myself. I am Sister Margaret Gaffikin, a Franciscan Sister of Peace. When I entered religious life, the church was calling religious congregations to renewal. This call led religious congregations to discern more deeply what their charisms were. As Franciscan women, we commit ourselves to the challenge of being messengers of peace by:

- Fostering gentleness and reconciliation as a critique of oppression and violence
- Serving the economically poor either directly or indirectly
- Supporting the advancement of human rights and the elimination of the exploitation of the poor
- Living a simple lifestyle so that, corporately, we first witness to solidarity with the poor
- Bringing the qualities and gifts of women to the life of the Church and world.

In word and witness, our ministries announce the evangelical message of peace and penitence. We serve the people of God in a variety of ways. We are sent to share the values of the Gospel, especially justice and peace.

We find ourselves serving in a variety of ministries as pastoral associates, educators, social workers, hospice nursing, visiting the homebound, supervising low-income housing, spiritual direction and prayer partners to all who request prayers.

As a congregation, we are committed to a corporate stance against human trafficking. We pledge ourselves to:

- Pray to end the injustice of trafficking
- Educate ourselves and others
- Collaborate with organizations to eliminate all forms of trafficking
- Support efforts to assist trafficking victims and survivors.

Presently, I am on the faculty of Immaculate Heart Academy where I have served for over ten years. I teach in the Religious Studies Department. The ministry of teaching gives me the opportunity to share the treasure of our Catholic Identity with students, faculty, and families.

I can encourage our young women to live the Gospel values of Jesus wherever they find themselves.

My previous ministerial experience has been varied. I served in the field of education (elementary and secondary school), in Formation Ministry for my congregation, (companioning women who are discerning a call to religious life) serving in leadership for my congregation as the Congregation Minister. One of St. Francis’ quotes sums up for me how I try to live my Consecrated Life: “Preach the Gospel and use words if necessary.”

The Joy of the Gospel and being a Franciscan is at the heart of my vocation. My great hope is that those who cross my path will sense my vocation as a female religious. It has given me a deep sense of gratitude to serve the people of God and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. I continue to live the calling of my Franciscan vocation each day and respond to the challenges of life with a joyful heart.

For information about the Franciscan Sisters of Peace see www.fspnet.org.

Franciscan Sisters of Peace



*Members of the Brothers and Sisters
of the Franciscan Third Order Regular*

One of the Best Kept Secrets of the Church: The Vocation of Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World

By Mary Frances Martin

In this 50 Shades of Gray world it comes as quite a surprise, a shock even, to many Catholics that the vocation to Consecrated Virginity Lived in the World exists at all. Not only are most lay Catholics, including the most devoutly practicing ones, totally ignorant of this vocation's existence but so are many priests and some bishops. Yet the vocation to Consecrated Virginity for Women Living in the World, although low in numbers (I suspect due, in large part, to lack of information), is flourishing today. Estimated numbers indicate that there are presently some 3000 plus consecrated virgins in the world with about 600 living in France, 250 in the United States and 3 or 4 in the Archdiocese of Newark.

But when did it start and what is this mystery vocation? Consecrated virginity is, in fact one of the oldest vocations for women in the history of the Church, existing long before the rise of religious orders. It is said that St. Matthew, the apostle, consecrated the first virgin (and may have been martyred for it). The early consecrated virgin saints (and martyrs) Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, and Anastasia are listed in the Roman Canon of the Mass. Consecrated virgins are mentioned in St. Patrick's Confession which was written in the 5th century. While consecrated virginity lived in the world fell somewhat into disuse during the Middle Ages due to the rise of religious orders, at least the spirit of this most ancient vocation never completely died out. Other consecrated virgin saints include Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima and Kateri Tekakwitha. In more recent times, consecrated virgins include St. Gemma Galgani and Blessed Pina Suriano. As with today's consecrated virgins, all of these women passionately believed they were called to give themselves entirely and completely, body and soul, to Jesus Christ as His spouse but not necessarily to live in a religious community.

Due to the interests and efforts of several women living in France in the early 1900's, especially one Ann Laflaive (consecrated in 1924), who received the ancient rite of consecration to a life of virginity (from the fifth century form), the Second Vatican council restored this vocation to its proper place as a legitimate and distinct form of consecrated life in the Church. A revised rite of consecration was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on May 31, 1970. Canon 604 of the 1983 revised Code of Canon Law describes this form of consecrated life this way:

“Through their pledge to follow Christ more closely, virgins are consecrated to God, mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church, when the diocesan Bishop consecrates them according to the approved liturgical rite.”

Consecrated virginity lived in the world is a separate and distinct form of consecrated life in the Church and not in any way viewed by the Church as a “stepping stone” vocation towards religious life or a “consolation prize” vocation for those not able to enter religious life. It is interesting to note that this vocation is the only one strictly reserved to women! That is because only women can accurately portray the icon of the Church as the Bride of Christ. Women seeking this consecration must also actually be virgins (exceptions are made for victims of rape or incest if they have otherwise lived chaste lives).

Please see *Consecrated Virgin* on page 7



Consecrated Virgins from page 6

The Rite of Consecration states that they must “have never married or lived in public or open violation of chastity”. While there is no upper age limit for women seeking this consecration and there is a recent trend towards younger women (usually mid-20’s) seeking consecration, the Church does require a certain level of psychological and spiritual maturity in candidates for consecration. That is because, unlike vows that can be dispensed, this ancient sacramental is permanent and irrevocable (a blessing cannot be undone)! Literature from the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins states:

“Through this sacramental, a woman renews her resolve to live in perpetual virginity for God and is set aside as sacred, espoused to Christ and belonging to Him alone. It is God Who accepts her resolution and makes it spiritually fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Candidates for consecration must be admitted to it only by their bishop. Likewise only their bishop or his bishop delegate may administer the prayer of consecration.

Being responsible for her individual financial needs, consecrated virgins are free to pursue any career they choose. In the United States consecrated virgins work in such diverse fields as medicine, accounting, science, psychology, teaching, real estate and engineering. They are artists, college professors and even a firefighter.

Some are retired or disabled. Very few work in Church positions. All of these women are passionately in love with God and dedicated to the Catholic faith. All of them view their spousal relationship with Jesus Christ as a concrete reality. They are devout women of prayer who regularly receive the sacraments. All strive with their whole being to be a constant reflection of God’s love for all souls in places where priests or religious usually do not go. They are a liberated and joyful sign of God’s presence hidden in the world. In an International address to consecrated virgins in 1995, St. John Paul II said: “It is also the task of virgins to be the hard working hands of the local Church’s generosity, the voice of her prayer, the expression of her mercy, the relief of her suffering sons and daughters.”

Therefore, consecrated virginity is about embracing a greater passion and not about giving up passion. As Raniero Cantalamessa says in his book entitled *Virginity: A Positive Approach to Celibacy for the Sake of the Kingdom of Heaven*: “Chastity is a wealth that comes from abundance of love, not from the lack of it.”

For more information on the ancient yet “new” and exciting vocation of consecrated virginity lived in the world, contact the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins or view their website at <http://consecratedvirgins.org>.





Book Review
Reviewed by Cosmos Ferrara

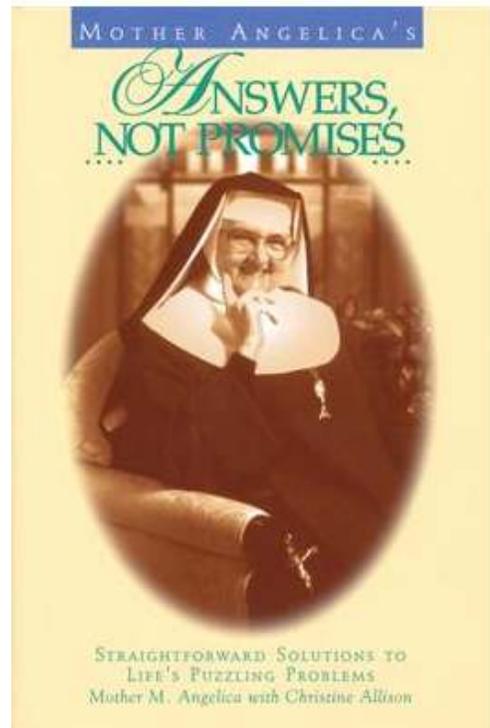
Mother M. Angelica's Answers Not Promises: Straightforward Solutions to Life's Puzzling Problems

By Mother M. Angelica with Christine Allison

In *Answers Not Promises: Straightforward Solutions to Life's Puzzling Problems*, Mother Angelica is not afraid to tackle the tough issues that trouble some believers. Among these are the existence of purgatory, heaven and hell; the soul, and angels. Other issues are put in the form of questions such as these: Why does God not answer my prayers? How can I forgive someone who has hurt me? Why does God send people to hell? Why am I afraid to die?

You're Not Such a Big Wheel

"Straightforward" is the operative word in this title. The wonderful thing about Mother Angelica's writing is that she treats profound issues in very understandable terms. Her tone throughout *Answers Not Promises* is conversational, directed at what she calls "ordinary" people who struggle with temptations, sins, frailties, and weaknesses. For example: "What I am trying to clear up is the way you think about yourself in the world. You're not such a big wheel. You are just a cog in it." She says that humility is not wearing a "kick me" sign; it is simply putting God first. She uses anecdotes drawn from her years of counseling callers and writers to her television network to personalize her message.



About the Author:

Born in Ohio, Angelica became a Franciscan Nun at the age of 21. In 1962, she founded Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1981, she founded the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). More than 15 million copies of her 50 spiritual booklets have been distributed throughout the world.

Volunteer Opportunity

Make a Difference in Someone's Life

By Celeste T. Villegas

Hebrews 13:16 says: "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." Undoubtedly, God is pleased with such "sacrifices" in that we are shown to be in a right state of heart and we are mirroring, in spirit, the nature of a God who continually does good

As one of many host congregations in the Bergen County community, Our Lady of Mercy Parish stands behind the "Family Promise of Bergen County" in its work of "keeping homeless families together." Through the kindness of Joni and Ron von Autenried, we are provided with their main website as follows: (<http://www.bergenfamilypromise.org/bfp/>). In it is a Family Promise invitation to "take action today and become a volunteer" with special emphasis on their Family Promise Literacy Initiative. The webpage also features two video links discussed in a recent host congregation meeting which Joni and Ron attended as follows: <http://www.bergenfamilypromise.org/bfp/whatever-you-do-today-watch-this-first/>.



How can we resist being part of an opportunity that clearly is in keeping with the relationship between evangelization and charity, "a theme dear to Pope Francis"? At the very heart of the Gospel, according to the Pope, is life in community and engagement with others. It is not very far either from the call from Scripture which says: "Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (*Romans 12:13*). It is the ever-present challenge in today's times to many congregations like OLM. A "Church without borders" as envisioned by Pope Francis – is "a Church that turns its eyes directly to the tremendous suffering of the poor and marginalized."

Spread the good news! Anyone may contact Family Promise directly by mail at 100 Dayton Street, Ridgewood, NJ 07450, by telephone at (201) 833-8009, or by e-mail through Margo, mheller@bergenfamilypromise.org.

A Reflection . . .

Facing Our Fears

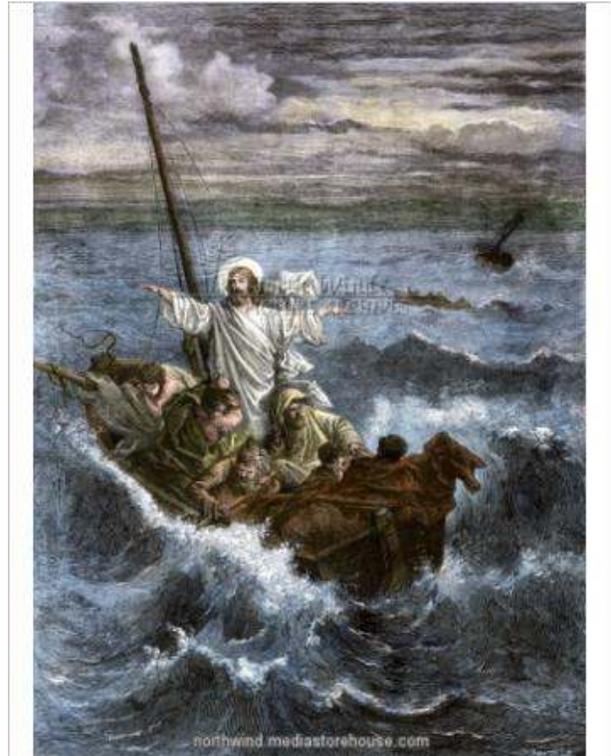
By Celeste T. Villegas

Storms, like suffering and death, are a natural part of life. In Scripture, *Matthew 5:45* says: “For (God) makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.”

How do we face our fears in our modern-day storms without being locked into attachments like alcohol or drugs? How do we ride out our storms without having to resort to divorce, desertion or suicide?

Much like the Apostles, in the “Calming of a Storm at Sea” (*Luke 8:23-25*), we can begin to survive our storms with a kind of faith that conquers fear and worry. If we stop for a moment to think – God loves us! He knows our thoughts and He cares for our deepest needs. Should we not then spend time in prayer and quiet worship to develop a relationship with our Heavenly Father? Like a potter with clay, He can re-shape our precious broken lives into something more fruitful.

Jesus Himself handled His fear of the crucifixion by taking His concerns to God, in faith. Being obedient unto death, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane saying, “Father if You are willing, take this cup away from Me, still not My will but Yours be done.” (*Luke 22:42*) Mary as well handled her fear of “not knowing all things” and having a lack of understanding of how the



Incarnation was to take place, with the same “obedience of faith.” She submitted freely saying to Angel Gabriel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to Your word.” (*Luke 1:38*) By their actions, Jesus and Mary are able to show us that faith is essentially linked with obedience to God.

What we will need to soldier on, as we face our fears, is a growing faith that will mature and strengthen on each trial toward obedience to God. Fortunately, as Christians, we are an Easter people.

We know that when we choose to face our fears, we will be given the ability to go forward in faith and move from hopelessness to joy, earnestly hoping for the Resurrection.

The Crucifix Is Mine

By True Jordan



Someone once said to me, “Why wear a cross, and why look upon a crucifix and recall the horrible loss”?

They said that it seems sinful and that it is in vain, to give such recognition to an instrument of death and pain.

Some say it is a partial sign of what happened way back when, the resurrection is what matters now and did so even then.

Within my heart a voice replies in loving tenderness, “The crucifix is beautiful for what it represents,”

That Jesus gave His life for me in all his innocence, that I might live and be forgiven of all my ugly sins.

When I recall the price He paid I repent a deeper way, to see Him upon the cross helps me bear my own today.

I know He understands my plight and I am not alone, it makes me know that I am loved and have a heavenly home.

The resurrection sign is glorious and fills out hearts with hope, but it too is a partial sign which leaves out what means most.

He hung upon a wooden cross and it was me He bought, He hung there for the world to see and not erase from thought.

The Eucharist is real to me as God’s sacrificial lamb, and the crucifix help to proclaim His death until He comes again.

When He was lifted on the cross on a hill called Calvary, it was why He came to earth to set the whole world free.

So there is glory in the cross lest I forget where life began, that He laid down His life for me that I may rise again. Alleluia!