



The Alaskan Shepherd

Volume 42 Number 7

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Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

SISTER MARIE TERESA BOULET, O.P. 1920-2004

Sister Marie Teresa Boulet, O.P., died quietly and peacefully in her sleep on Palm Sunday, April 4, 2004, at about noon. She was laid to rest in the Sinsinawa Dominican cemetery. Sixty-four years earlier, here also at her Dominican Community Convent, affectionately called "The Mound", she first professed her vows, as a young girl of nineteen.

At her wake on April 6, 2004, Sister Alita Lisbeth, O.P., former Director of the Fairbanks Diocese Office of Worship, had this to say about Sister Marie Teresa:

In her heart, Marie Teresa heard that familiar call: "What are you searching for?" She heard it often, not just once, not just in Alaska, but everyday Marie Teresa asked Jesus, "Where do you dwell? Where do you live? Where do you abide? Where can I find you? Where would I go to find you?" Every day came the loving answer, the invitation to come and to see. That "coming" and "seeing" was her ministry—day by day, year after year--as familiar as a dear friend. It instilled a sure flame of loving kindness in her heart, put a sparkle in her eyes, a knowing smile upon her lips, and filled her conversation with a clever light humor that urged her to be "in on it" whatever "it" was. IT was the unfolding of her life-long journey.

She traveled by dogsled in Wales, in a skin boat to Little Diomed Island, by single-engine bush plane out of Holy Cross, and by Ford Pathfinder across the parking lot of Sacred Heart Cathedral to the House of Prayer during spring "break-up" days in Fairbanks.

God found in Marie Teresa a welcome dwelling place. Long before Palm Sunday, she found her dwelling place in God. Welcome home, Marie Teresa!"

At her memorial Mass in Fairbanks on June 15, 2004, fond memories of Sister Marie Teresa were recalled. They spoke volumes of her quick wit and gentleness. Father Normand A. Pepin, S.J., mused:



Sister Marie Teresa Boulet, O.P., poses with the late Bishop Robert L. Whelan, S.J., in front of The House of Prayer in Fairbanks.

--Photo courtesy of Maura & Geoffrey Brennan.

I was Sister's third choice—she told me so! Her first response on hearing of Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J.'s sudden death on August 6, 2000, was, "Oh dear, I was hoping he'd say my funeral Mass!" Of course her

CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
1312 PEGER ROAD FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709
Phone: 907-374-9532 <http://www.cbna.info>

Special Masses are offered throughout the year for you and your intentions by our Missionary Priests. Please pray that God may bless us and our work.



Sister Marie Teresa treks across the frozen tundra to retrieve the daily mail in Holy Cross, Alaska, in 1979. --Alaskan Shepherd Archives

first choice would have been Bishop Robert L. Whelan, S.J., who retired to Spokane, Washington, in 1995. Bishop Whelan received his final call to the Lord on September 15, 2001. After Bishop Whelan's retirement, Father Pepin took on the duties of the House of Prayer including daily 7:30 am Mass and Sister Marie Teresa became his faithful assistant and dear friend.

Father Pepin went on to say, *Sister Marie Teresa did not go around making a big splash. She was much like St. Dominic in her quietness. It has been written that those who best knew St. Dominic were able to feel Christ—just by being near him. That is how it was with Sister Marie Teresa. She learned service very early in life. It was that call to service that first beckoned her to Alaska to serve as principal. She lived a spectacular life of service, whether she was serving as an administrator, keeping house, or preparing lunch. Sister Marie Teresa gave more sermons than I have ever given and she never even approached the pulpit. She was a true example of St. Dominic's chief characteristic—serving in those quiet little ways so like the true spirit of Christ.*

Helen Boulet was born on July 31, 1920, the fourth daughter in a family of five girls and one boy, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. She spent her entire childhood in Green Bay. She was baptized in St. John Evangelist parish on August 15, 1920. She attended parish schools until seventh grade when her school building was condemned. Thereafter, Helen attended public schools

through her senior year. Given the Depression years, her family could not even consider private schooling.

Sister Marie Teresa credited her vocation to the Sisterhood to a strong example within her home. She knew by junior high what she wanted to do with her life.

Helen Boulet finished high school in 1937, and spent one year doing office and lab work for a pharmaceutical company, while her application to join the Sinsinawa Dominican community was being processed. The Sinsinawa Dominicans are a Third Order Dominican community founded to educate young women. From its beginning the community has been dedicated to education. Helen personally had no knowledge of that community, but relatives had, and their admiration for it sparked her interest. Learning that the Sinsinawa Dominicans had two schools in Green Bay, she became acquainted with the Sisters of one of them. She found them gracious and welcoming, and thus thrived on their manifest love and concern.

On September 8, 1938, accompanied by one of these Sisters, Helen—after having said her good-byes to family and friends—arrived for postulancy at Sinsinawa Mound, in the southeast corner of Wisconsin. (In 1844, Sinsinawa Dominican Founder, Venerable Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli, purchased 800 acres of land, 450 of which are now known as the Sinsinawa Mound.) The next two years of Helen's life were filled with study, prayer and formation in the spiritual life.

On August 4, 1939, Helen received the Dominican habit and a new name, Sister Marie Teresa. Then she began her canonical novitiate year, a year she devoted to the study of the rules, the constitutions of



Sister Marie Teresa, as Principal of Immaculate Conception Grade School in Fairbanks, in 1974. --Alaskan Shepherd Archives

We want to thank in a special way those of you who have included the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska (our legal title) in your bequests and wills, and those of you who, at the time of the deaths of dear ones, have suggested that, in their memory, contributions be made to the Missions of Northern Alaska or to the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. For more information, please contact Tom Buzek, Business Administrator: 907-374-9528.

CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA

1312 PEGER ROAD
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709-5199

October 1, 2004

Dear Friends of the Missions of Northern Alaska,

Over the years many of you have written to us who serve the Lord and His people here in the Far North to express to us your admiration for what we do in this missionary diocese to make known the "Good News," to bring the Mass and the sacraments to the Lord's widely scattered flocks entrusted to our care. You have graciously thanked us for ministering to the people of northern Alaska in spite of difficulties of all kinds. We are touched by such expressions of sincere admiration and gratitude. They hearten us, and are very much appreciated.

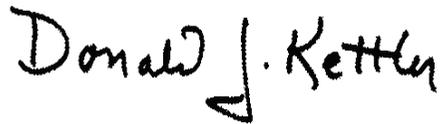
Remember: what we do, you do; where we go, you go. In a very real sense you are our co-workers, our co-ministers. With your prayers for us and our works, and with your generous financial aid, you help us carry out our basic ministries, and you share in them--and you will share in the rewards. As you are making possible our ministries, you are, at the same time, "laying up treasure for yourselves in heaven."

A few years ago, with a small donation, a kind benefactor of the Catholic Missions of Northern Alaska established the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. The principal of this fund cannot be touched; only the interest earned by it can be used for current needs. This fund is our one best hope for a sound, long-range fiscal future. We feel the time to build it up to where its earnings will finally get this needy 409,849 square-mile missionary diocese on a more or less stable financial foundation is now. Accordingly, I now invite you, ask each one of you to help us get that Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund into high gear by giving it a significant boost--to the extent that your means allow, of course. Know that in the fund your gift will keep on giving into the far-distant future, making you a permanent part of what we are and do for the Lord and His people here in northern Alaska.

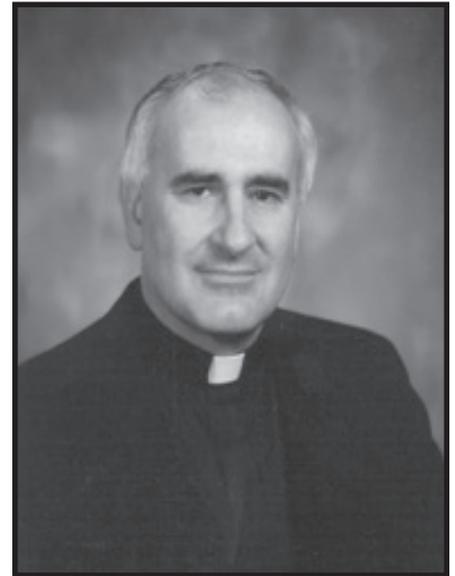
On this occasion I want to thank personally each and every one of you who has ever contributed, no matter in how small a way, to our ever so vital Endowment Fund. And I want to thank you in advance for your response to this, my urgent appeal to help us build up that fund.

And, finally, I want to thank in a special way those of you who have included the Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska (our legal title) in your bequests and wills, and those of you who, at the time of the deaths of dear ones, have suggested that in their memory contributions be made to the Missions of Northern Alaska or to the Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund. God bless us everyone!

Very gratefully yours in Our Lord,



Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Fairbanks



TO: CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NORTHERN ALASKA
1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709 DATE _____

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Dear Bishop Kettler:

Enclosed is my special donation of \$ _____ to your all-important Alaskan Shepherd Endowment Fund.
I am happy and grateful to be able to be a part of your missionary diocese and its ministries.

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Gleeson,
The Last Vicar Apostolic of
All of Alaska

The First Bishop of Fairbanks

Carol Louise Hiller



Gleeson, The Last Vicar Apostolic of All of Alaska may be ordered from *The Alaskan Shepherd*, 1312 Peger Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-5199 for \$20.00 a copy. This includes postage and handling.

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This personal story of Bishop Gleeson unfolds against the backdrop of early American growth and expansion, with special focus on Alaska as it evolved from a territory, was purchased by the United States and then achieved statehood. This part of the globe is explored from the earliest introduction of Christianity into the territory by the Russian Orthodox priests until the growth leads to division into three dioceses by the Catholic Church along with scattered Protestant development within the frigid climes.

The life of Bishop Gleeson and his insights into the future of Alaska are woven together into a fabric that lets readers see a metamorphosis of Alaskan Natives from hunters and gatherers toward a cultural subgroup that can cope with the demands of today's world. Gleeson served as the Last

Vicar of All of Alaska, and one can capture a glimpse of a man with a servant-heart who was a Joyful Frontiersman for God.

The book includes a Foreword by Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., currently residing at Gonzaga University where he is writing "Alaskana Catholica," an encyclopedia about all things Catholic in Alaska.

About the Author:

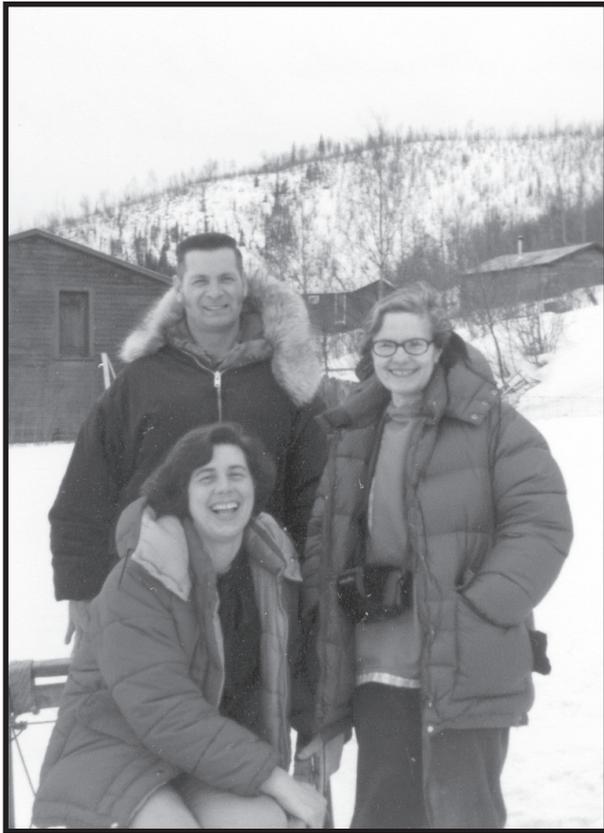
Sister Carol Louise Hiller, O.P., after several years of teaching in elementary schools, altered her educational emphasis to high school librarian. As a librarian she lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, and worked at Monroe Catholic High School. During her last two years at Monroe, Bishop Whelan requested Bishop Gleeson to speak to her about his life and work, especially as Shepherd of the Church in Alaska, for the sake of an historical record. His personal recollections and those of members of his family and his many friends and acquaintances, along with Church and Jesuit archival materials, form the the basis of this Gleeson biography.

Presently Sister Carol Louise resides in the Dominican Motherhouse in Adrian, Michigan.

An excerpt from Sister's Preface:

Turning his ring round and round on his finger, Bishop Gleeson searched his memory for a considerable time. I soon learned that this merry-go-round with the ring was to Bishop Gleeson as doodling is to many other thoughtful people. Almost tentatively, talking as much to himself as to me, he spoke of his early life as a hazy memory at best and possibly just a hazy memory of family stories told by friends and relatives. And so began a series of interviews that eventually elicited a rich array of information about the bishop's life, Jesuit esprit de corps, and the Church in Alaska.

I was a comparative newcomer having participated in the Fairbanks faith community for approximately five years; consequently, there are areas I might have pressed for information, but did not. Some readers may have questions that did not come up between us, and other questions for which I supply no answers. Nevertheless, to the best of my ability this manuscript traces the life of Francis Doyle Gleeson who administered the Church in Alaska from 1948 through 1968. Characteristically he gave few specific directions, but indicated his desires in a calm, kind manner.



The late Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., (then Father Mike) pauses, in 1980, for a photo in Holy Cross, Alaska, with Sisters Marie Teresa and Judy Tralnes, C.S.J.

--Alaskan Shepherd Archives

the Order, and the spiritual life. The year ended with the making of her temporary profession of vows on August 6, 1940. By the end of that August, Sister Marie Teresa had received her first mission assignment at St. Rose of Lima School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There she spent the next six years teaching classes comprising about 50 second graders. She found preparing the little ones for their first Holy Communion the most satisfying part of those years.

Sister Marie Teresa spent the year 1946-47 earning a post-secondary school degree at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin. In 1947, she was assigned to Corpus Christi School in New York City. She found this assignment to be "a whole new experience." For eleven years, she taught, and learned to love, the children of different cultures and nationalities there. The school was considered a model school of its kind. Visitors from various colleges and universities, especially from Columbia University and from neighboring parishes, came to observe the school in operation.

Sister Marie Teresa spent the years 1958-60 teaching in Muncie, Indiana, and the years 1960-62 teaching in Rockwell, Iowa. This latter assignment was another new experience for her. Rockwell was a small, farming town of around 600 people. There she taught some 25 pupils ranging from fifth to eighth grade. After Rockwell, she spent a year at Winnetka, Illinois, and then, in the summer of 1963, she moved to St. Mary's grade school in Portage, Wisconsin. There, for six years, she taught the eighth grade, and social studies in two other grades, and was principal.

Next, Sister Marie Teresa was assigned to Holy Rosary School in Minneapolis. There her idea of one day serving in Alaska began to take shape. Alaska had been a dream of hers since her high school days, when she heard Father Bernard R. Hubbard, S.J., talk about his experiences in the cold North. The thought that the founder of the Sinsinawa Dominicans, Father Massuchelli, had advocated working among Native Americans heartened her enough to raise the question of being a missionary in Alaska with her Sister Provincial. To her pleasant surprise, the latter encouraged her to look into the matter of needs and opportunities in Alaska. It was learned that a principal was needed for Immaculate Conception Grade School in Fairbanks. By this time, however, Sister Marie Teresa had already been assigned to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for the school year 1973-74. During her Christmas vacation, she made a trip to Fairbanks for an interview. The need for a principal was still there. In the eyes of all parties concerned, she was the one to fill the position.

Early in July, 1974, she arrived in Fairbanks. At that time Immaculate Conception Grade School was still staffed in a large part by members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. The young volunteers made up in enthusiasm for what they lacked in experience. Most had just received their academic degrees and teacher's certifications. She found working with them both an inspiration and a challenge.

For the really great Alaskan adventure, Sister Marie Teresa did not have to wait very long at all. Early in 1975, she was approached by the Diocesan Director of Religious



Sister Marie Teresa cools off in northwestern Alaska's Chukchi Sea.

--Alaskan Shepherd Archives

Education about teaching summer religion classes on Little Diomed Island. This was an opportunity to see bush Alaska beyond her wildest dreams. In early July, she began the trip to Little Diomed with her teaching partner, Sister Judy Tralnes, C.S.J., and Father Louis L. Renner, S.J. By jet they flew to Nome, where they waited a few days for word that a boat would be in Wales to take them over to the island. By small bush plane, under marginal flying conditions, they flew to Wales. During the summer, the island can be reached only by boat. During their first night at Wales, a crew of Diomed hunters landed there in a traditional Eskimo skin boat, an umiaq. Early the next morning, on sleds towed behind the snowmachines, the three were brought out to the edge of the shore-fast ice, where boat and crew were ready to take them on board for the 26-mile crossing to the island. Space in the boat was shared by the three, the crew, and several walrus carcasses. Keeping an eye glued to his compass—for the morning was shrouded in fog—the captain, with signals from the lookout man in the bow, deftly steered the boat around ice floes still partially clogging Bering Strait. The trip—except for several wide-of-the-mark shots fired at a walrus—was uneventful, but shiveringly cold.

The two Sisters taught classes every afternoon to children they found responsive and interested. Mornings they spent in preparation of classes and getting acquainted with the people on the island. Father Renner offered Mass every day, and visited the people. After five weeks on the island, the Sisters returned to Fairbanks.

Sister Marie Teresa remained in the Fairbanks schools until June, 1978. That summer she moved to Holy Cross, Alaska, where she worked in the Holy Family parish—of which Father Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., future Bishop of Fairbanks, was, at the time, pastor. With him, a pilot with an airplane at his disposal, she flew often to various villages in the area. At Holy Cross she

gave religious instructions to the children, and became part of the community there.

In June, 1983, Sister Marie Teresa returned to Fairbanks. For the next four years, she worked as secretary in Monroe Catholic High School. It was her first real contact with senior high students, and, in her own words, she “enjoyed it immensely.”

In August, 1987, her community offered Sister Marie Teresa a Sabbatical. The first semester of that she spent in a renewal program for Women Religious at St. Stephen Priory in Dover, Massachusetts. The second semester she spent at her community’s Edgewood College, taking courses in religious studies. After her Sabbatical, in August 1988, she returned to Fairbanks to assist Robert L. Whelan, S.J., retired Bishop of Fairbanks, in a partnership operation of the House of Prayer. In their quiet, deeply spiritual ways, the two were a perfect match up. After Bishop Whelan retired to Spokane, Washington in 1995, Sister continued on at the House of Prayer, now as an assistant to Father Normand A. Pepin, S.J.

Early in the year 2000, Sister Marie Teresa, too, went into retirement.

On May 9, 2001, she traveled south to reside at her Motherhouse in Sinsinawa. In December 2003, she needed hip surgery which she came through with “flying colors and hardly any pain,” according to Sister Alita Lisbeth, O.P. “She was such a darling in the hospital that they would ask to bring in staff for training sessions with her.”

At Sister Marie Teresa’s memorial Mass in Fairbanks one pensive friend

commented, “I like to picture Sister Marie Teresa arriving in Heaven. I imagine Bishops Kaniecki and Whelan sitting at a card table—Sister’s hand already dealt and waiting to be played. What a joyous reunion that must have been.”

--Patty Walter



*Always ready for an adventure--
Sister Marie Teresa Boulet, O.P.
1920-2004*

Special thanks to those of you who have sent stamps! These 37¢ first class gifts are of great use to the Alaskan Shepherd.

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