



Volume 43 Number 2

# The Alaskan Shepherd

March 2005



*Some give by going to the Missions*

*Some go by giving to the Missions*

*Without both there are no Missions*

## SISTER DOROTHY M. GILOLEY, S.S.J.

Editors Note: On March 22nd of last year Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J., wrote, "Dear Patty, You have probably heard already—I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I will be flying home to Philadelphia tomorrow for treatment and to stay with my community."

Sister Dorothy sent this greeting to friends in December: "Kinuwina lu kwinalu Chrisimasim nayusumok elipnum ooquikni! [Eskimo for "May the peace and joy of Christmas be with you through all the year!"] Greetings from the SSJ Motherhouse in Philly! I have been in Philly since March 24! Almost nine months! I can't believe it! Little did I know that I would be home for the holidays this year! It is truly a miracle that God brought me through this "detour" in my life and stayed with me every step of the journey. I have so much to be grateful for this Christmas and I look forward to the New Year and my return to ALASKA. I saw my radiologist for a check up this week and also had a mammogram and ultrasound. Everything is fine and I am so happy! I am getting ready to return to my beloved Alaska!! Love and prayers, Dorothy."

Bishop Donald Kettler writes in early February, 2005, "I have decided to hire Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J., as our diocesan youth and adult religious education coordinator. Sister Dorothy has served as pastoral facilitator in Pilot Station and in Mountain Village. Most recently, she returned to her motherhouse to deal with a bout of cancer. She has completed her treatment and is doing very well. Sister is highly qualified to work in the areas of religious education and RCIA and I am pleased to offer her this position."

The following is Sister Dorothy's assemblage of letters written to friends and family during her first months of ministry in Alaska.



*Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J., shares a picture with this little black puppy on a snowy day in Pilot Station, Alaska.*

*--All pictures courtesy of Sister Dorothy*

My story, a story of my first eight months of ministry in the Alaskan bush, began as I sat waiting in the airport at St. Marys. I had been there for four hours, having arrived from Mountain Village earlier that day. The winds were too strong to fly to Pilot Station my final destination. I was looking forward to my trip to Pilot Station, since there was a Potlatch that weekend and I had never experienced one before.

Finally, around 5:30 PM, a plane was able to fly into Pilot Station and I arrived in time for the Potlatch! On my arrival at Pilot Station, I discovered that the sewer pipes were frozen, again, and that would mean a few inconveniences to

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*Sister Dorothy visits with Craig Waskey, John Regis, Jr., and Mountain Village parish administrator, Margaret Waskey.*

contend with! But I did get to the Potlatch and experienced wonderful fan dancing and the rhythmic drumming of the Yup'ik people! Their spirit and their joyfulness permeated the school gym and I was caught up in the chanting. The people were attired in native dress and for some dances there were fifty or more performing—plus the drummers. The smiles on the faces of the Yup'ik people spoke of their pride and heart-felt love of their native traditions. Potlatch is a special time in the villages when usually youth are presented to the community. Families make traditional dresses and traditional dances are performed.

Reflecting on the past eight months of my living and working among the Yup'ik people on the Yukon River out here in western Alaska, I am grateful for the many unique and wonderful experiences I have had. I arrived in St. Marys in mid-August of 2003 and spent several days meeting with the priests, sisters, laity, and deacons. Thus began my mission in Mountain Village. My mission is to be a pastoral facilitator to two villages, Mountain Village and Pilot Station. The distance between the two villages is about 40 miles and I travel between the villages via small planes. I spend about two weeks a month in each village. I am there to assist and support the ministers and parish

leaders to help them take ownership of their parishes while training them in the liturgical and catechetical ministries. In Mountain Village, we have a very capable parish administrator, Margaret Waskey, a wonderful deacon, Elmer Beans, and an active Parish Council. In Pilot Station, we also have wonderful church leaders like Abe Kelly, Theresa Fancyboy, and Mary O. Fancyboy. Eucharistic ministers preside at the Sunday liturgical celebration in the absence of a priest. We are in the process of preparing the parish for the formation of a parish council as well as identifying leaders to carry out the various ministries that are needed there. Since both parishes had not had the Sacrament of Confirmation for several years, each parish voiced their desire to prepare for the sacrament in 2004. In Pilot Station there are about 40 youth and young adults preparing for Confirmation and in Mountain Village there are 30 youth and young adults also preparing for Confirmation. Bishop Kettler will be coming the week of May 17. The people of both parishes are very excited and are getting ready for the arrival of the Bishop. It will be a wonderful event and the entire parish will be participating. Of course, we also have preparation classes for First Communion and Baptism classes as well. The catechists in both villages are very dedicated and take time to attend the training sessions given at St. Marys by the Native Ministry Training Program. Catechists, liturgical ministers, and other ministers attend these workshops from the 24 villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region. Since I am a musician, I want to use my talents to enhance the music in the villages and teach the children and adults to play the piano and the guitar, I have started lessons in both villages. Tom Buzek from the diocesan office in Fairbanks asked the parishes there to place an ad in their church bulletins requesting used keyboards and guitars. The response was overwhelming! We now have four keyboards and four guitars in each village and about 20 taking lessons in each village. My aim is to have musicians trained to lead the music in each village. Music for the liturgies includes hymns in both Yup'ik and English. We hope to include Yup'ik songs, drumming, and dancing in our upcoming Confirmation Mass. I teach music in both schools, two afternoons a week to the children in grades Kindergarten through six, when I am in the villages. I also played the keyboard for the school Christmas Program in Mountain Village.

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.

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*  
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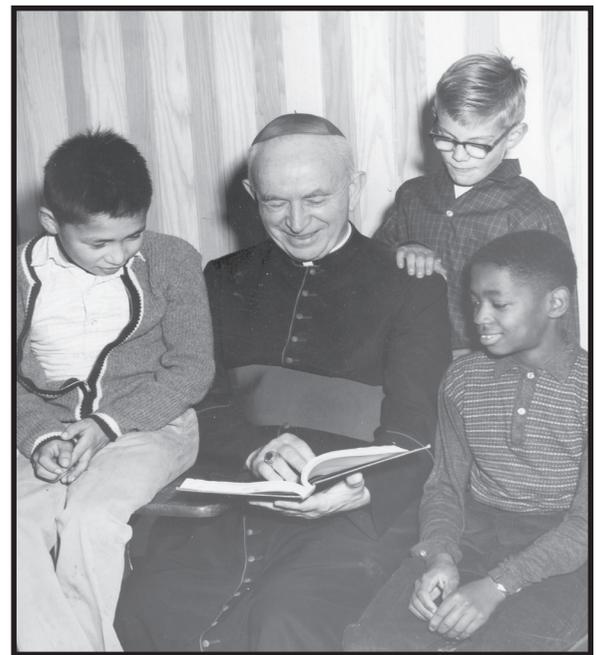
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This personal story of Bishop Gleeson unfolds against the backdrop of early American growth and expansion, with special focus on Alaska as it evolved from a territory, was purchased by the United States and then achieved statehood. This part of the 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 has completed "Alaskana Catholica," an encyclopedia about all things Catholic in Alaska.*

**This book will be available for purchase in future Alaskan Shepherd newsletters. (See reverse side.)**



#### **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 ministered 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. Calling upon her love of literature, creative writing talents and persistent research skill, she adeptly wove together the events in the life of a man who helped shape the Alaska frontier and Catholic community within it. Sister presently resides at the Dominican Life Center, in Adrian, Michigan.



#### **An excerpt from Sister's Preface:**

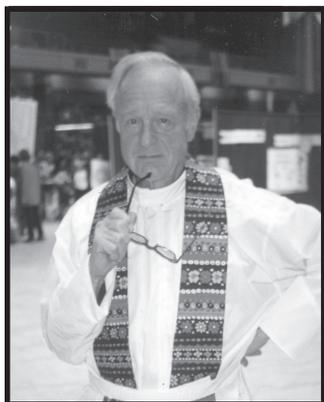
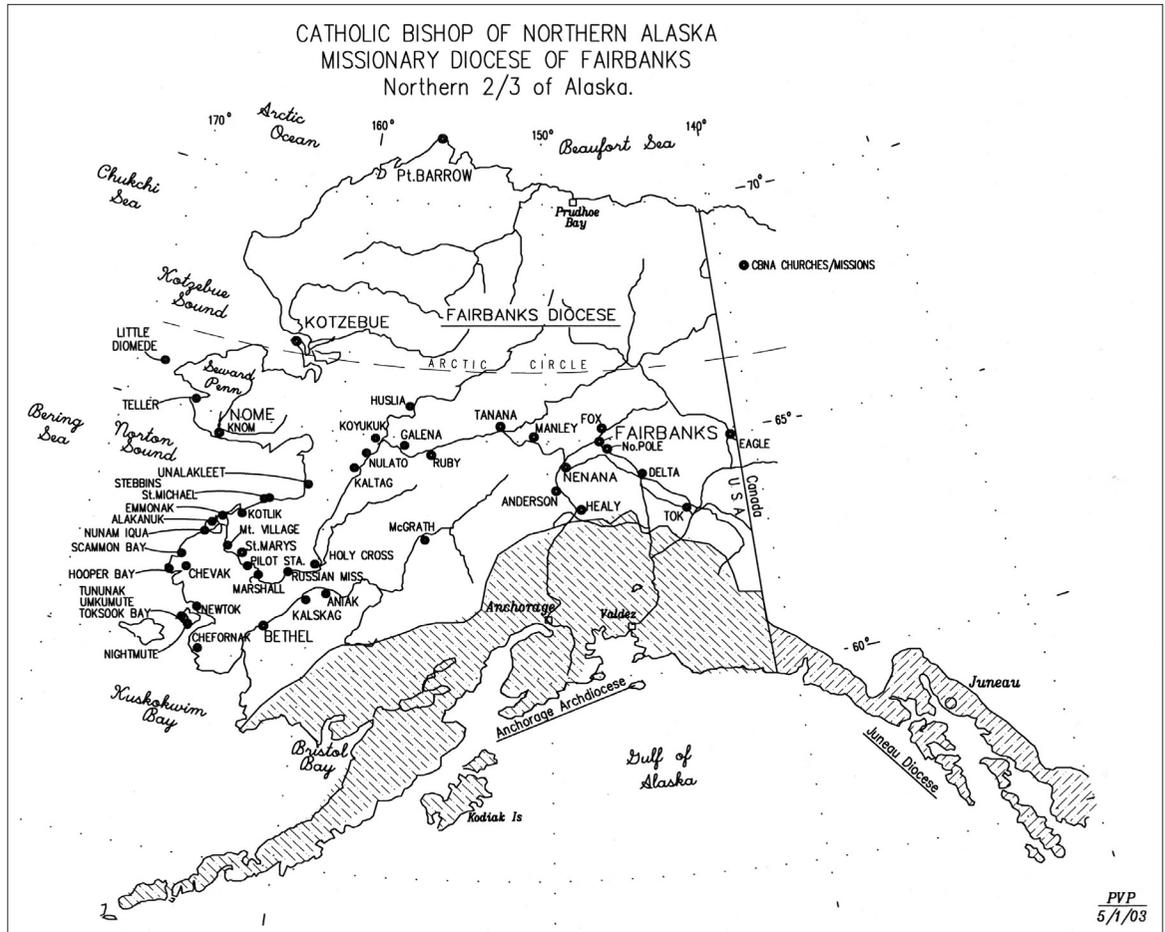
Turning his ring round and round on his finger, Bishop Gleeson searched his memory for a considerable time. I soon learned that this merry-go-round with the ring was to Bishop Gleeson as doodling is to many other thoughtful people. Almost tentatively, talking as much to himself as to me, he spoke of his early life, of his family and 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.

## MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

Mountain Village, so called because it lies at the foot of the first "mountain" met as one ascends the Yukon River, is located on the right bank of the Yukon and 87 miles upstream from its mouth. It was a Native fish camp, until the opening of a general store there in 1908 prompted people from nearby settlements to move to the site. A post office was established there in 1923, a salmon saltry in 1956, and a cannery in 1964. During the 1950s, people from the Black River drainage also moved to Mountain Village. It became a regional educational center, after it was selected as headquarters for the Lower Yukon School District in 1976. For many years, this Central Yup'ik Eskimo village had a regional hospital. In 1920, Mountain Village had 136 inhabitants; in 1930, 76; in 1939, 128; in 1950, 221; in 1979, 568; in 1990, 742; and in the year 2000, 755.

### PILOT STATION

The Central Yup'ik Eskimo village of Pilot Station is located on the right bank of the lower Yukon River, some 11 miles east of St. Marys, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. In 1890, it had a population of 103; in 1929, 87; in 1939, 39; in 1950, 52; in 1960, 219; in 1970, 290; in 1979, 301; in 1990, 455; and in the year 2000, 550. Pilot Station received its own post office in 1950.



After some 20 years of research and writing, Father Louis L. Renner, S.J., has reached the publication stage for his history of the Catholic Church in Alaska, *Alaskana Catholica*. We are talking here of a big volume, 744 pages, richly illustrated.

Though the exact date of the book's availability and its purchase price are not yet known, we will gladly reserve your copy hot off the press. As soon as we know the date of the book's availability and its price, we will send you an order form. Your response to this will give us some advance idea of how many copies we will need to have on hand here in the Alaskan Shepherd office, since the book has been so greatly anticipated by so many.

Yes, please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ copy(ies) of *Alaskana Catholica*.

I understand that, when the book's date of publication and its price are announced,  
I will be sent a follow-up order form.

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The children love to sing and look forward to their half hour lesson twice a month. I have enjoyed making friends with staff in each school and I am edified by their dedication and genuine concern for their students. They go out of their way to help the children and the youth succeed. I feel it is very rewarding to be known as “the Sister from the Catholic Church—who teaches music.” When I walk around the villages, the children and youth introduce me to their parents. This has brought an increase in the numbers of children and youth preparing for the sacraments and of couples interested in being married in the Catholic Church as well.

I spend my time in each village assisting the catechists, the Eucharistic ministers, and meeting with the parish leaders. I also visit the elders and the sick in their homes. Often there are maintenance problems to be addressed as well as various reports for the diocese that need to be completed. In both villages, the people are generous with their time in helping with the needs that arise and give freely of their talents. Children stop by daily to visit and to chat. The children are always happy and love to play outdoors even in the really cold weather. Right now in Mountain Village the parish council is planning for a Spring Bazaar to raise money for a new public address system and a new copying machine – they hope to have these in place before Confirmation. Both parishes have



*For half a century, the 1947 church, dedicated to St. Charles Spinola, stood and served well the people of Pilot Station. However, the years took their toll. In the summer of 1994, it was taken down. By December 10, 1995, the present church (above), designed by Deacon Paul V. Perreault, P.E., Engineer for the Diocese of Fairbanks, was ready to be formally dedicated by Bishop Kaniecki.*

rummage sales to raise money and keep their churches in order and decorate for each liturgical season.

Christmas time in both parishes was a wonderful event; the attendance at the liturgies was standing room only! In Mountain Village, on Christmas Eve, the church was filled and there was very little room left to stand! Deacon Elmer Beans was the presider and all participants, from lay ministers to the choir were outstanding. Both parishes did have a priest for Mass for Christmas: Pilot Station for Christmas Eve and Mountain Village for Christmas Day. This past week the attendance for Ash Wednesday in Mountain Village was again standing room only and the Deacon was the presider with the Eucharistic ministers assisting him. I was very inspired by the singing and the reverence of the people who brought their families to receive the ashes to begin the Lenten season.

I love animals and there are two puppies that live on the river behind the church in Mountain Village. So, I feed them dog biscuits and play with them for my recreation. I also have been a volunteer for the Iditarod sled dog races in Anchorage and I plan to do it again this year when I go there for a week of R&R, doctors’ appointments, and shopping, etc.

There are many challenges that I had to get used to here in the villages. I sincerely appreciate simple things— running water, a hot shower, being able to wash my clothes, electricity, and heat—more than I ever have in my life. The times I have been without these have made me realize what a luxury they are and that I should not take them for granted. The man who lives next to me in Mountain Village does not



*While Father Gene Delmore, S.J., was pastor of Mountain Village, the present church (above) was built. “On Palm Sunday, April 12, 1987,” his account reads, “the Catholic population of Mt. Village gathered in the little church that had been used since 1957 and processed over to the new church with palms waving and incense flowing.” This new church was built by local people under the foremanship of Jerry Carpluk. Its furnishings—benches, tables, a lectern and altar—were likewise constructed by local volunteers. The new church was dedicated on August 23, 1987, by Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., Bishop of Fairbanks at the time.*



*Sister Dorothy visits with Elders and Eucharistic Ministers in Mountain Village. From top left-- Vivian Jimmy and Sister Dorothy. Bottom Left--Josephine Harpak and Raphael Jimmy.*

have running water and he needs to “pack water” each week for his needs. There are several homes in Pilot Station where the people on the river do not have running water yet but hope to get it this summer. I have a four-wheeler to get around in Mountain Village and now I have a snow machine for the winter. I am getting used to driving it. Initially it was a challenge but when the walk to the post office to get the mail each day is a mile up hill you appreciate the ride.

The people in both villages are friendly and are grateful for my presence. They have made me feel at home. I even spent a day at fish camp with the family of Margaret Waskey, parish administrator in Mountain Village. The Yup’ik people here really know what is most important in life. Their faith, their culture, and their families are what sustain them. Material goods and creature comforts do not mean much here. I truly see the face of God in each person I encounter and I find God’s presence everywhere “out here.”

In spite of the inconveniences I experience, like not having fresh fruit or vegetables sometimes, only having one TV station to watch (I can’t tell you how many times I tried to change the channel!), not having a stove to bake with (in Mountain Village,) I am still happy and feel that I am doing God’s work. I pray each day that more priests, brothers, sisters, and lay ministers come to join us in this wonderful ministry. I pray also for more native deacons and more dedicated

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laity to come forth in the villages as well. The Catholic Church is alive and well out here in the Alaskan bush and God walks among the Yup’ik people who treasure their Catholic heritage and live their faith each day. Sometimes I feel sad when I realize how much I miss not having Mass on a weekly basis and then I think of these people who have lived with this sacrifice all their lives and yet remain dedicated to their faith; to their Church.

I will end with a quote I heard at a prayer service in Anchorage when I was there around Thanksgiving. It was a prayer service for the four women who were martyred in El Salvador in 1980. These words were by Frances Dearman, a minister in Anchorage:

*If your faith is as wide as the heavens, and your work is the healing of the world, then perhaps, wherever you are led in the Spirit is home and whomever you encounter is your sister and your brother in faith.* When I heard these words, they hit home for me and I thought of my days in the Alaskan bush and of my home on the Y-K delta with *my* sisters and brothers in faith.

—Sr. Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J.



*Sister Dorothy prepares for her trip back on another frequently used mode of transportation—the four wheeler. Sister Mary Anne Kollmer, O.P., (left) and Sister Kathy Radich, O.S.F., look on. St. Mary’s Mission Boarding School can be seen in the background. The Boarding School, now a conference building, is owned by the CIUNERKIURVIK Corporation. The diocese is able to use the building to hold training seminars and conferences for ministers in the Y-K Delta region.*

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