



The Alaskan Shepherd



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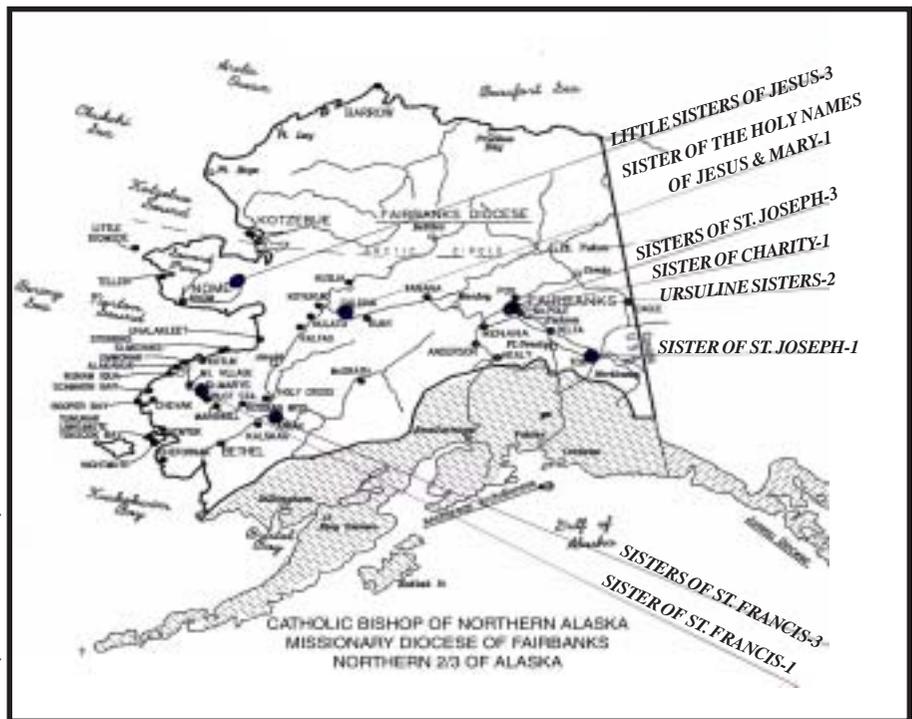
Some give by going to the Missions

Some go by giving to the Missions

Without both there are no Missions

MISSIONARY SISTERS IN ALASKA: PART II

Editor's Note: The Sisters of St. Ann were first to set foot in Alaska, in Juneau, in 1886. There they built a school and a hospital in their quest to bring Christ to the Great North. They came to serve as cooks, laundresses, teachers, nurses, guides, catechists, gardeners, seamstresses, and, in the most desolate cases, as parents to orphans left in the wake of influenza and tuberculosis epidemics. They saw the invitation to minister in Alaska as a most complete way to serve God and humankind, and they welcomed the opportunity to live their religious life to the fullest. Most importantly, these first Sisters, along with priests and Lay Brothers, helped to "clear the trail" for our modern-day missionary men and women in Alaska. At one time, the Sisters serving in the Diocese of Fairbanks were numerous. Today, we are fortunate to have fifteen Sisters serving in the most Northern areas of Alaska. In the September *Alaskan Shepherd* issue, you were introduced to seven of the Sisters serving the Diocese of Fairbanks. I am pleased to offer you this concluding update on the remaining eight Sisters. —Patty Walter



The Sisters of St. Francis
Sister Kathy M. Radich, O.S.F.
Sister Ellen Callaghan, O.S.F.
Sister Rose Monica Katusz, O.S.F.
Currently Serving: St. Marys, Alaska, and surrounding villages.
Sister Marian Leaf, O.S.F.
Currently Serving: Aniak, Alaska, and surrounding villages.

The Sisters of St. Francis were founded in Philadelphia, in 1858; hence, they are known as the Sisters of "St. Francis of Philadelphia." Since their founding, they have been dedicated to serve directly and indirectly the poor. In their Mission Statement of 1986, they reaffirmed their commitment to minister to those who are poor, marginal, and oppressed. In 1996, they recommitted themselves to be "willing to take the necessary risks to be a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world, especially with women, children, and those who have no voice."

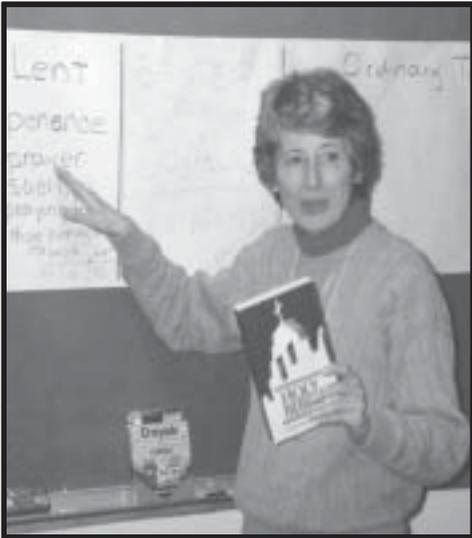
The vision for the Alaska Yukon-Delta region represented by the Franciscan Sisters is the empowerment of a truly indigenous Church. The professional ministers (15 for the 24 parishes and 3 programs) in the region see training and the integration of the Yup'ik culture and the Roman Catholic Church as their main focus. Training includes working with the men preparing

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to become deacons, preparing lay presiders to lead Sunday services, funeral services, triduum services, and prayers for the sick and dying in the absence of a priest, helping catechists adopt the curriculum they developed for the region, assisting administrators to care for the temporal needs of the communities, and developing maintenance people to care for the parish facilities. The focus on integration is the desire to have the Native people be both truly Yup'ik and truly Catholic.

Sister Kathleen Mary Radich, O.S.F., has been ministering in Alaska since 1986, ten years after she took her first vows on August 10, 1976, at the age of 25. During her first assignment, at St. Thomas the Apostle church and parochial school, in Riverside, California, she taught junior high math, science, and religion. Her second assignment, a six-year project, found her building a youth program at St. Catherine's in the newly formed diocese of San Bernardino. With the completion of the youth program, Sister Kathy looked for a new challenge. She found that in an ad offering ministry in the Diocese of Juneau.



Sister Kathleen Radich, O.S.F., teaches a class to ministers during a Native Ministry Planning Training workshop on Liturgy and Music in St. Marys, Alaska.

Photo by Sister Rose Monica Katusz, O.S.F.

She stepped off the plane into the "Last Frontier," and immediately felt at home. In August of 1986, she joined two more Sisters to form a team that would be the Office of Ministries for the Diocese of Juneau. They served as administrators to a number of small parishes outside the Juneau area. During her six years in the diocese, she had the privilege of developing a youth program, organizing the Diocesan Institute (an adult education conference), and cooking for Fun in the Son [of God] Kids Camp each summer.

In September of 1992, she took two years off to attend the University of Maryland Baltimore School of Social Work to obtain a master degree in clinical social work. Upon graduation, she longed to return to rural Alaska, but stayed in Anchorage to minister as a counselor for the Family Support and Counseling Center of Catholic Social Services, the social service arm of the Archdiocese of Anchorage. That ministry was one of the requirements she had to fulfill before being licensed as a clinical social worker. Twice monthly, she drove or flew to Kenai and Wasilla to provide counseling services.

That next year, 1995, two Sisters of the Franciscan community joined her in Anchorage. Together the three Sisters formed a team ministry group that chose to live in the poorest,

most violent area of the city. The goal was to provide a peaceful, prayerful presence. When the Counseling Center closed, Sister Kathy, now still only 46 years old, again began to feel the call to a ministry in a more rural area.

In the spring of 1997, Sister Kathy received a phone call from Father Theodore E. Kestler, S.J., asking if he could come and speak to the Sisters about ministry in western Alaska. His plea, "we are desperate," had the ministry team quickly saying "yes" to an invitation to work for the 409,849 square-mile Diocese of Fairbanks. Her assignment took her to the west coast of Alaska to serve among the Yup'ik Eskimo people. Years later, she recalled the warm welcome she had received at an Eskimo Deacons Retreat, and how the wife of one of the retreatants told her simply, "Now you are one of us." The endearing comment made Sister Kathy feel that she had again returned home.

Since September of 1997, Sister Kathy's ministry has been based at St. Marys, a predominately Yup'ik village of about 500. She travels to 23 other villages in the region as the Coordinator of Rural Ministries. Her responsibilities are to coordinate the vision, ministries, and ministers of the entire region. As Coordinator, she also represents Bishop Donald J. Kettler, implements diocesan policies, and communicates the pastoral and physical needs of the region to the diocesan offices. Travel is by small plane and sometimes snowmachine or four-wheeler. The absence of a road system makes travel challenging, and unexpected changes in weather often bring plans and schedules into disarray.

Sister Kathy Radich, O.S.F., says of her experience thus far: *My time here among the Yup'ik people has been greatly blessed. I find the Yup'iks to be very much rooted in the same values that Francis of Assisi lived and preached. As a follower of Francis, I have found that the way the Yup'iks live out their values of simplicity, love, and respect for creation, joy, and humility has been a wonderful witness and challenge. As I travel and spend time with the people, my prayer is that they also receive Francis' deep-rooted belief in the love God has for each person and for themselves personally.*

Sister Ellen Callaghan, O.S.F., worked with Sister Kathy in Anchorage and has now, for the past ten years, been at St. Marys as Director of Native Ministry Training Program.

Ellen Callaghan comes from immigrant parents in the second smallest state of the Union, Delaware. She was educated by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. When ready for high school, she was among the adventurous teenage girls to enter a high school that was just being established and only partly built. As a member of Padua Academy's Pioneer Class, she became very involved with creating a great school with nothing but a handful of enthusiastic students who were willing to do their own fundraising and help with maintenance chores to develop a much needed high school for the girls of Wilmington, Delaware. A year after graduation, Ellen entered the religious community that had provided her with 12 years of an excellent free Catholic education.

As a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Sister Ellen Eugene Callaghan taught elementary school for nine years in Maryland before being assigned to two Baltimore Catholic high schools. During her 24 years as a sophomore homeroom moderator and teaching a variety of science classes, she developed a love for ecology. By the end of her teaching years, Sister Ellen was honored by several national and state organizations for her contributions to environmental education and preservation of the Chesapeake Bay. The Baltimore news media eventually dubbed her, "The ECO-NUN."

At the age of 55 and the peak of her teaching profession, she volunteered for her community's new program, Team Ministry. This was the concept of missioning volunteer Sisters to regions of the country that have few Women Religious in Church ministry. In August 1995, she and two other community members established their first convent in Anchorage, Alaska. While ministering in the Archdiocese of Anchorage, Sister Ellen served as coordinator of the new program for Pastoral Leadership and helped with the initial research for the founding of Lumen Christi High School. She also initiated an after-school study program for her Mountain View neighborhood children.

In September 1997, she was hired by Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., as director of the Fairbanks Diocese's Native Ministry Training Program for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region based in the Eskimo village of St. Marys. This was a dream come true for her. Since her arrival in Alaska, Sister Ellen had always desired to minister directly with the Eskimo people. The NMTP fulfills its mission of assisting the Y-K parishes to prepare lay ministers for Church leadership roles by providing a variety of weekend training workshops: on-line catechetical teaching tips, producing printed materials essential to catechetists and Eucharistic Ministers, homily sound bites on the diocesan KNOM radio station, and on-site training visits. For the last ten years, Sister Ellen has traveled to 24 remote Catholic parishes by small plane and snowmachine. Her greatest joy comes from parish training visits that enable her to work one on one with new volunteer ministers. She takes great delight witnessing ministers become more confident in their service to the spiritual life of their local parish. Traveling to a village is always more relaxing for Sister Ellen, because she does not worry about keeping her promise of safe and punctual return of ministers to their families, when they come by chartered planes for weekend workshops in St. Marys. Alaskan weather does not always allow people to keep their Plan A travel arrangements!

In April 2006, Sister Ellen was called to return to her high school as their honored guest and recipient of their highest alumnae award for the dedication of her life to education and the missionary spirit of the Church. Sister Ellen admits that the crystal trophy is beautiful, but it does not bring her as much joy as a phone call from a parish administrator saying, "The parish has new persons willing to be Catechists and others to be Eucharistic Ministers. How soon can you come to train them?"



Sister Ellen Callaghan, O.S.F., drives a 4-wheeler to retrieve the mail from the Post Office in St. Marys, Alaska.

Photo by Sister Rose Monica, OS.F.

Joining Sister Kathy and Sister Ellen in St. Marys, in 2003, was Sister Rose Monica Katusz, O.S.F., Administrative Assistant to Regions Programs. Sister Rose Monica is from the east coast, born in Pennsylvania and raised in Maryland. She entered the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia in 1968. Sister Rose has taught grade school, high school and some college courses. After she finished her studies in biochemistry, she asked for an experience working with the poor. Her request prompted an assignment in Zambia, Africa, for three months. In 1995, she had the opportunity to assist in the founding of Saint Clare's Secondary School for Maasai girls in Kenya. She taught mainly biology and chemistry. After seven years the Franciscan Sisters were able to turn the school over to Kenya native Sisters and Sister Rose returned to the United States. During her year of transition back into American culture, Sister Rose had the opportunity to visit Sisters Kathy and Ellen in Saint Marys. She writes of that experience: *Being with the Eskimo people paralleled my experience with the Kenyan people and I felt comfortable, with the people, with the Franciscan Sisters,*



Sister Rose Monica Katusz, O.S.F., previews a completed training video, in St. Marys, Alaska.

Photo courtesy of Sister Rose Monica, OS.F.

and with the Alaskan lifestyle. When Sister Kathy offered me the position of Administrative Assistant to the Y-K Programs, I was happy to accept. Sister Rose has spent the last four years in that position assisting the Native Ministry Training Program, the Rural Deacon Program, and the Office of Rural Ministries. In addition, Sister Rose has taken on special projects that include a weekly Y-K Region Newsletter and the production and editing of educational DVDs. And she has assisted in the production of the Yup'ik hymnals and accompanying CDs.

Sister Marian Leaf, O.S.F., joined the Alaskan Franciscan Sisters in 2006, as Parish Facilitator in the Y-K Region. She works with the villages of Aniak--where she resides--Holy Cross, Kalskag, Pilot Station, and Mountain Village.

Marian Leaf graduated from high school in 1973 and received a BA in sociology from Neumann College in Aston, PA. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia on Jan 15, 1978. She took her First Vows in August 1980 and professed her Perpetual Vows in August 1986. In 1988, she received a Masters in Social Work from Marywood College in



Sister Marian Leaf, O.S.F., reads at a liturgy during Professional Days, in St. Marys, Alaska.

Photo by Sister Rose Monica, O.S.F.

Scranton, PA. Of her brief time in Alaska, Sr. Marian says, "I landed on this stretch of earth back in August 2006, after 12 years in Zambia, Africa, and a year of Sabbatical. It was during my transition time back here in the U.S. that I realized I still had a yearning for "a missionary life and work," and felt convinced that God had "something else up his divine sleeve," when my work in Zambia ended. My deepest hope and prayer was that God would reveal an opportunity here in the States to which I could happily respond. However, despite trying to envision my life back in the States, Alaska was never on my mind's radar, until it unexpectedly popped up on the horizon with one little e-mail. I became interested in Alaska, when one of our Sisters already serving here, Sr. Rose Monica, who herself had spent a number of years in Africa, contacted me and invited me to "have a think" about Alaska. Still in the midst of my Sabbatical, the idea percolated

and with a growing suspicion that God was indeed in the invitation, I accepted the challenge as yet another blessed adventure that God deems fit to dish out to me periodically.

Many things attracted me here: the diversity of cultures and traditions, which have so much to teach our society and from which I have much to learn, the beauty yet hardship of a rural setting, small village life, opportunities and challenges not found elsewhere that will stretch and shape who I become, a true need for a "presence" of Sisters with the declining number of Sisters and priests in the diocese. All these, and so much more, surfaced within me a desire and a confidence that, indeed, God had chosen Alaska for me.

My ministry in the Fairbanks Diocese is as a "Parish Facilitator," a support and resource person for our local, lay ministers serving in our parishes. Teamed with Fr. Stan Jaszek, I connect mostly with the Parish Administrators, Eucharistic Ministers, Pastoral Coordinators and catechists to assist them in their service to the local faith community, offering encouragement and skill-building where needed. I am assigned to five parishes, all within the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of the Diocese, but my home base is Aniak. With my ministry so spread out, (Aniak, Kalskag, Holy Cross, Pilot Station and Mountain Village) I always seem to be "on the move," a somewhat older but literal version of the "Flying Nun."

My favorite part of the work is getting to know so many people in the different villages. I am enjoying learning about the traditions and "way of life" in this corner of the globe and, while it takes time to really settle in to village life here, I hope that I continue to learn in the years ahead. Of course, being awe-struck with the beauty of God's creation in all its seasons is the big bonus of living here. Adjusting my pace to match rural life is giving me opportunities to deepen my prayer and develop a level of contentment with my aloneness. What I love above all else is God's humor of putting Africa and Alaska in the same lifetime, is how God works in moving my life around, is how God surprises me with the unexpected, and is how good God is to me to gift me with such an experience as serving here in Alaska."

The Sisters of St. Joseph
Sister Marita Soucy, C.S.J.
Sister Michele Kaelin, C.S.J.
Currently Serving: Fairbanks, Alaska
Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J.
Currently Serving: Fairbanks, Alaska,
and Diocesan Villages
Sister Maggie Butler, S.S.J.
Currently Serving: Tok, Alaska

The roots of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph are found in the town of Le Puy, France, around 1650. The Sisters of St. Joseph respond to challenges that include: violence and abuse, oppression, conflict, hunger, homelessness, and alienation of families, to name but a few.

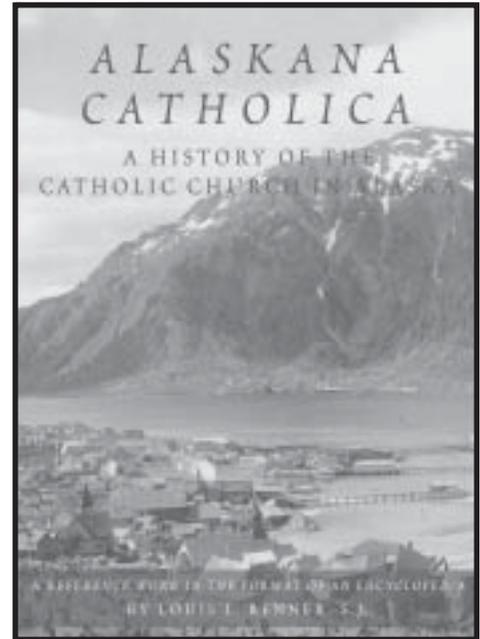
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Professor of History Emeritus , Marquette University

“One of the main intents of this volume,” we read in the author’s Preface, “is to keep alive for posterity the memory of many major Catholic Alaskan figures—clerical and lay, Native and non-Native, living and deceased—by the recording of their lives and deeds.”



Alaskana Catholica (“a unique gift, whether to give or to receive”) is a reference work in the format of an encyclopedia. It offers its readers something more than mere bare-bones reference data and Who’s Who-s. Moreover, some entries have a story about the given entry’s subject attached to them. Some have a “tapestry” woven out of a series of quotations from the mission diary of the given place attached to them. These stories and tapestries give readers a kind of “you are there” experience, of being present at an event of the past or at a place remote to them.

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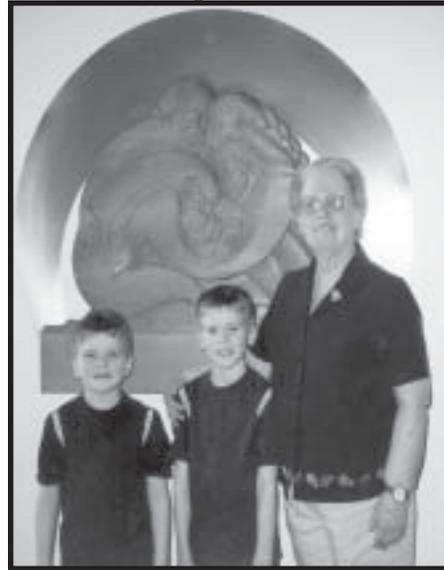


Sister Marita Soucy, C.S.J., poses for a picture in the Kateri Tekakwitha Center Garden, in Galena, Alaska.

Photo by Patty Walter

Sister Marita Soucy, a member of that venerable Congregation, first arrived in Alaska in August of 1986. Presently, she is stationed in Fairbanks and serving as Urban Native Ministries Liaison. Before coming to Alaska, she served as principal of an inner-city school in New Haven, CT. She attributes her presence in Alaska solely to Divine Providence. At the time, the move seemed to be motivated by more human concerns. Sister Marita's blood sister, Claire Desrochers, along with her husband and three children had moved to Fairbanks about 12 years previously. At the urging of her sister—to come see the many wonders of Alaska, and also to check out the teaching positions available at the Catholic Schools and the Native villages--she came to visit and speak with superintendent of Catholic Schools, Sister Eileen Brown, S.N.J.M. As a result of the visit, Sister Marita, along with Sisters Michele Kaelin and Sister Ann Sabol, accepted three teaching positions in Immaculate Conception Grade School in Fairbanks. Sister Marita spent her first three years in Alaska teaching in the middle grades and in Monroe Catholic High School. For the next four years, she became principal of the grade school. As her seventh year ended, she heard the call to another corner of the Lord's vineyard. After talking with Bishop Michael J. Kaniecki, S.J., she retired from the academic world to undertake a new challenge, that of ministering to the elderly, the sick, the dying, and the imprisoned. In addition to visiting and ministering in the hospital and prison, she found a need for ministry in the residential and long-term care facilities in Fairbanks. The great need for addressing the multitude of pastoral concerns in these individual communities led Sister Marita to pursue information regarding the Stephen Ministry Program. The program focuses on key topics, such as confidentiality, dying, hospitalization, feelings, suicidal tendencies, grieving and the like. After thorough research, Sister Marita presented the program to Bishop Kaniecki, who asked her to attend an intense 2-week program. She instituted the program in 1993. Currently, over 20 Stephen Ministry lay associates minister within the Diocese of Fairbanks. After spending nine years in that ministry, Sister Marita--along with Sister Marilyn Marx, S.N.J.M.--was assigned to Galena, an Athabaskan Indian

village on the right bank of the middle Yukon River. Both Sisters had originally hoped to minister in bush Alaska. At Galena, the two Sisters opened the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Center--dedicated on August 31, 2003, by Bishop Donald J. Kettler. Its purpose is to prepare lay people for Church ministry in eight Athabaskan Indian villages. In 2006, Sister Marita returned to Fairbanks to minister to urban Alaska Native people, to share their joys and sorrows, and to facilitate communications between them and Bishop Kettler.



In Holy Family Chapel--the chapel at the Catholic Schools complex in Fairbanks Sister Michele Kaelin, C.S.J., poses with students Matthew and Andrew Walter.

Photo by Patty Walter

Sister Michele Kaelin, C.S.J., was born in Stamford, CT. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery on September 8, 1949 and professed her Final Vows on August 24, 1955. Sister Michele's ministry has been deeply rooted in teaching. From 1953-1986 she held teaching positions in nine different schools in Connecticut, as well as one in Massachusetts.

In 1986, Sister Michele ventured to Fairbanks, Alaska, to continue her teaching ministry at Immaculate Conception School, where she has been ever since. Sister Michele remembers, *The minute I arrived in Alaska, I just loved it. The people immediately impressed me. There was such a spirit of friendliness in all, young and old.* In total, her teaching years span 54 years. She has a special place in her heart for all children, but perhaps her fondest memories are with 1st graders whom she taught for 15 years. She currently holds the position of Religious Education Coordinator for grades K-6. Amanda Angaiak, principal of Immaculate Conception School, says of Sister Michele: *Sr. Michele Kaelin's presence as a religious at Immaculate Conception School has provided many an opportunity to witness the power and importance of religious vocations at work in the Church. For 21 years, Sr. Michele has been instrumental in the faith development of our students at ICS not only because of her excellence in teaching about our Catholic faith and traditions, but because she truly lives as a disciple; preaching not just with words, but with actions of love and a lived faith. Students, families, and colleagues alike appreciate her prayer life and genuine approach to spirituality. Just as Sr. Michele cherishes each individual in our school, so too is she truly cherished by one and all!*



Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J., prepares to do her errands around Mountain Village, on a new snowmachine donated by our generous benefactors.

Photo courtesy of Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J.

Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J., first arrived in Alaska in 2001. When asked to provide a reflection on her ministry Sister Dorothy quoted Helen Keller by saying, “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” Sister Dorothy went on to explain: *These words describe for me what my life in Alaska is all about. I consider my ministry a blessing from God and I try to live my life with passion and gratitude everyday. As a Sister of St. Joseph from Philadelphia, PA, I have had many ministry experiences. I was an elementary school teacher, a director of religious education, a youth minister, a pastoral associate and a campus minister. I have served in the inner city of Philadelphia, in New Jersey, in Maryland and in West Virginia. My coming to Alaska in 2001 was the fulfillment of a longed-for dream.*

Sister Dorothy served first in Anchorage as Director of Religious Education at Our Lady of Guadalupe parish. She then came to the Diocese of Fairbanks to serve as a pastoral facilitator in two Yup’ik villages, Mountain Village and Pilot Station in western Alaska. Currently, Sister Dorothy serves as the Diocesan Director of Religious Education. She sees her ministry as being a resource person in faith formation to the five parishes in the Fairbanks area, and to the four road system parishes, as well as to the coastal communities of Nome, Teller, Little Diomed, Kotzebue, and Barrow. Additionally, this year, she is also visiting the eight Athabaskan Indian villages in Alaska’s interior.

Sister Dorothy instituted a Religious Education Certification program for the diocese and assists the mission parishes in faith formation—for both children and adults, and sacramental preparation. As a musician, she uses her talents to teach guitar and keyboard, whenever possible, at the missions she attends.

This past summer she and Sister Maggie Butler, S.S.J., with the assistance of two young Sisters from Philadelphia, coordinated a Vacation Bible School in Kaltag, Delta Junction,

and Tok. The Bible School was made possible with a grant from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia.

Sister Dorothy says of her mission thus far: *I have a special devotion to St. Therese and I feel she has guided me to the Fairbanks Diocese. She is the patroness of our mission. I live in the St. Therese House of Prayer, and the mission in Kaltag is dedicated to her as well. St. Therese has answered many of my prayers and many times, I have prayed with her relic and have seen so many people healed in all the places I have ministered. I love my life in Alaska. I am inspired by the beauty of her land and wildlife, by the pioneering spirit of her people and by the faith and courage of the missionaries in whose footsteps I dare to tread each day. Truly, I walk on holy ground.*

Sister Maggie Butler, S.S.J., is the most recent Sister of that Congregation to join the Alaska team, in 2006, serving as Pastoral Administrator at Holy Rosary Catholic Church, in Tok. Tok is located at milepost 1314.2 along the Alaskan Highway, 206 miles south of Fairbanks—the Diocese’s most “southern” road parish. This is Sr. Maggie’s second “tour” in Alaska, having previously served in the Diocese of Juneau.

The oldest of four children of Pierce and Joanna Butler, Maggie was born and raised in the city of Philadelphia. She attended St. Gregory’s elementary school and West Catholic High School. She worked for a year before entering the community. When she entered in 1971, religious life was changing as a result of Vatican II. Many of the traditions were undergoing change while others, “written in stone,” were still in effect.

Sister Maggie has taught elementary children, grades 1 and 5, hearing impaired children in kindergarten, and she taught high school Theology and World Culture in Wildwood, New Jersey. Sister also spent seven years working in parish ministry in Southeast Alaska. Her ministry continued with a return to her Alma Mater as Director of the first RCIA program at a Catholic High School in Philadelphia. Sister Maggie did not think she would ever return to ministry in Alaska, but she is happy that God provided an opportunity to make the return possible.



Above, Sister Maggie Butler, S.S.J., outside of Holy Rosary Church in Tok, Alaska, poses next to a thermometer boasting minus 40—proof that “south” is just a direction in Alaska.

Photo by Sister Dorothy Giloley, S.S.J.

Sincere thanks to those of you who occasionally send us new stamps!